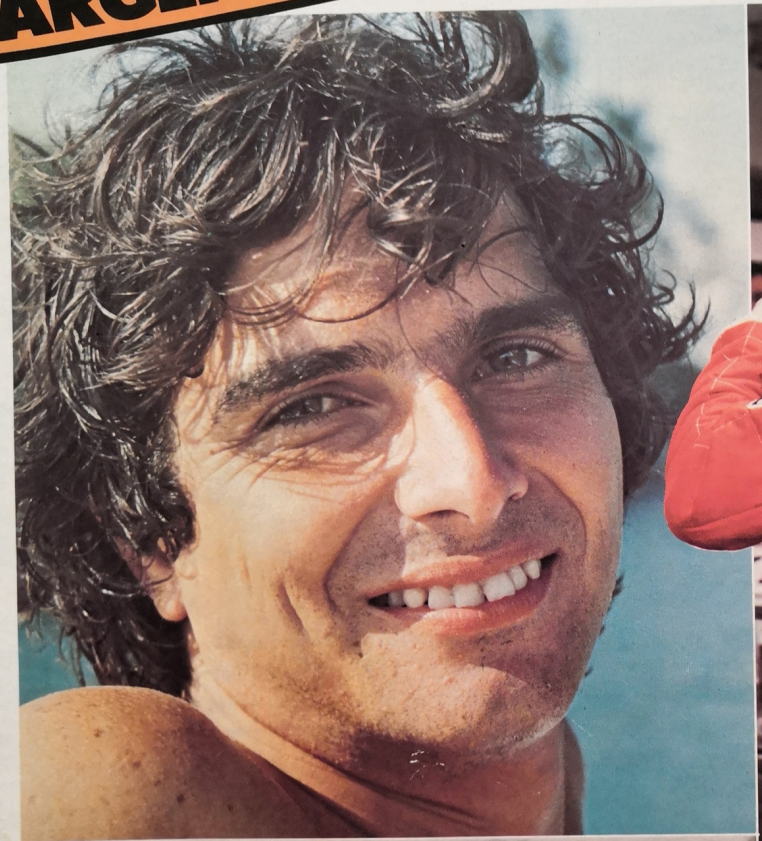
Grand Prix international

ARGENTINA



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The Formula One magazine is published 10 days after each Grand Prix.

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The paddock in Buenos Aires

ANGLO-SAXON: THE WAY TO WIN

As luck would have it in Buenos Aires, a silly little electrical failure in the Ford-Cosworth DFV engine of Hector Rebaque's Brabham was the only obstacle standing in the way of a convincing 1-2 result for the men from Chessington.

Despite this set-back, Alastair Caldwell, racing manager of Parmalat-Brabham, was his usual sanguine self when he considered what might have been. *"The team next to us in the paddock was Talbot,"* he said, *"and we only had to look over the fence to see the problems you bring on yourself when you're not using a nice reliable engine like the DFV.*

"Last year Ligier had the Cosworth DFV in their cars, and therefore no engine problems. Suddenly, this year, they find themselves preoccupied with pipes and wires and tubes, three mechanics per engine, black boxes and all sorts of junk strapped to the back of the car, all in an effort to get their V12 engine running properly.

"If you go down the pit lane, you'll see that none of the established Cosworth teams are worrying about engines. For us, the important thing is the racing car itself: the engine is so trouble-free that we regard it merely as a spacer which has to be changed every three or four hundred miles (or in the rare event of it blowing up)."

There is, of course, a BMW turbo in Brabham's future, although Caldwell emphasises that it will only be raced when it is good and reliable. *"The problem at the moment is that all the turbos are unreliable and, therefore, distracting. This goes for the BMW we've been testing too.*

For the time being, of course, the normally aspirated Brabham with its clever hydro-pneumatic suspension and controversial skirts looks more than capable of maintaining the competitive edge of this consistently quick team. Nevertheless, one is tempted to wonder if justice would have been done if the Cosworth engine that failed in Rebaque's chassis had, by chance, been fitted in the team's other car.

WANTED: ENGINEER

Several hours after practice had finished at Buenos Aires, a red-headed figure sat alone on a box of spares in the shadow of the pits. It was John Macdonald, a director of March Grand Prix Ltd and probably, at that moment, the most disillusioned man in Buenos Aires.

For the third race in a row, the March cars in which Macdonald had once had so much faith had failed to qualify. He had a somewhat public flare-up with his driver Derek Daly in the pits during practising, and sponsors were beginning to ask questions.

"I knew that it was going to be difficult," confessed the tough Londoner, *"but I never imagined that you could do as much graft as we have done for no result at all."*

The lack of performance of the March-built chassis was Macdonald's main worry, for he remains confident in the abilities of his drivers - both Derek Daly and Eliseo Salazar - and in the mechanics who work for him. He had made some enquiries by telephone to the contractor who had manufactured the monocoques of his Williams-inspired cars, and was already planning for the future.

"What we need is an engineer," he concluded. *"I've been speaking to Ron Dennis of McLaren, who is the same sort of guy as me, and he says that he keeps out of the way when his designer John Barnard is working with the driver."*

"If I thought he would come and work for me, I would offer someone like Gordon Murray £2000 a week, plus expenses, to leave Brabham. But that's not possible. So I'm going home to England to look for a good designer. Don't worry, we'll be back... and we're not giving up."

SENOR PRESIDENTE FANGIO

Between the FI practice sessions on Saturday, there was a distinguished visitor to the pits in Buenos Aires. Making his usual quiet tour of the teams was five-times world champion Juan Manuel Fangio, still - in his 70th year - with the powerful presence which commands everyone's attention.

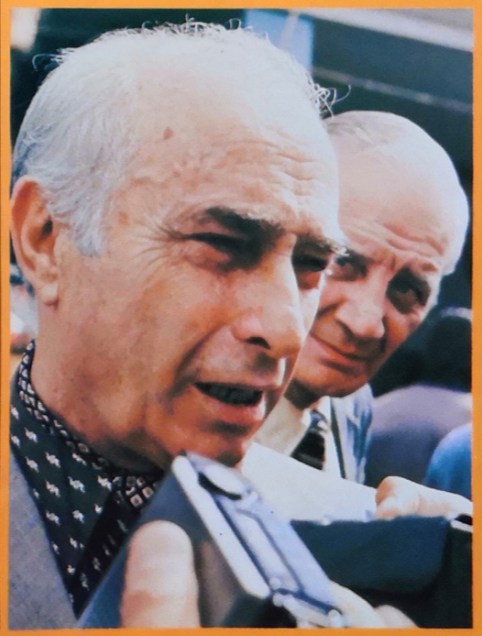
One youngster whose eyes opened wide at the prospect of shaking the great man by the hand was Bruno Giacomelli. Fascinated, the 28 year old from Brescia forgot his Alfa Romeo problems for a moment as he watched the "Director Honorario de la Prueba" moving along the pit lane.

While he retains his sporting links as an official of the powerful Automovil Club Argentina, Fangio's main business remains his Presidency of Mercedes Benz (Argentina), a major company with 4000 employees and an imposing old-fashioned office on the Avenida Libertador in the fashionable down town area of the federal capital.

The Mercedes connections date back to Fangio's two world championship years with the Stuttgart firm, in 1954 and 1955, and he has maintained them ever since. Mercedes has always made trucks in Argentina, and the recent upturn in the country's economy has prompted the military government to lift its once strict controls on the importation of foreign cars. The streets of the city may not be exactly crowded with Mercedes, but the showrooms below Fangio's presidential office are full of new 500 and 380 S-model cars, priced at three times the European rate.

Despite a heart attack some years ago, Fangio at 70 retains a trim figure and the famous steely grey eyes which transfix his guests. Incredibly, he has lost none of his skills at the wheel, as British race fans will testify, for it is less than two years since he electrified the crowd at Donington with some sideways laps at the wheel of a pre-war Mercedes GP car which he hadn't seen until moments before he stepped into it. Typically, he drove the car on that occasion for charity, and when we visited him in his office he was contemplating another trip to England at the invitation of a charitable body.

No one in motorsport has even managed to approach the record of success which Fangio achieved in European racing between 1949 and 1958. It is most unlikely that anyone will do it again.



At the Press Conference which, inevitably, he was to call before the Grand Prix in Buenos Aires, Jean-Marie Balestre, as ever, was not short of glib answers. He had a good one for the provincial Argentine pressmen who had accused him of ignoring them in favour of the more glamorous Buenos Aires media: *"My itinerary only takes in major capitals, Gentlemen,"* **he retorted.** *"I never stay in villages."* **It was in this inimitable style that the President of motorsport's international Federation was to make his return to Formula 1. It evidently took place in a capital city because a gentleman has no time to waste on "villages" like Los Angeles and Rio de Janeiro.**

What was there for the good President Balestre to see in this capital city? No less than the implementation of the peace agreement which he had mentioned several days beforehand, a peace albeit precarious not to mention bleeding. It goes without saying that it requires some dexterity to sign a peace agreement with the right hand while the left conceals a cutlass.

No doubt M. Balestre will also have noted that Colin Chapman was threatening to withdraw from Formula 1 unless the FISA Appeal Court agreed to clear his still unraced Lotus T88. He may even have observed that the hydro-pneumatic suspension of the Brabham BT49, while in perfect conformity with "the letter" of the rules, met with the united opposition of rival constructors - all of whom have threatened to follow the same dubious route if Gordon Murray's rule-bending devices continue to be permitted. As far as M. Balestre is concerned, it would appear that there is othing illegal about the Brabhams. Yet witnesses in BA will admit to having seen him doing a lap of the Autodromo belly down in the grass. Could this indicate that even the President suspected something?

At heart, M. Balestre must have been delighted. The once united group which had opposed him appears to be fragmenting. Racing's current problems unquestionably have their origin at FISA headquarters, home of the sport's hotly disputed regulations. Let us not forget that it is only a few months since the President stated that he would prefer to see Formula 1 racing perish than to watch it survive in its current state. Two of the most important figures in British motorsport, constructor Frank Williams and designer Gordon Muray, are already in a toe-to-toe dispute. There's a worm in the fruit. It's starting to do serious damage.

The paddock in Buenos Aires

MARLBORO'S MP4 RACES AT LAST

There was some quiet optimism in the McLaren International camp after the Argentine GP. Despite the failure of the carbon-fibre Marlboro M04 to finish the race (due to a vibration in the transmission), the car had been pushed past Riccardo Patrese's Arrows into 6th place by John Watson for a couple of laps before making a pit stop.

Apart from a broken shock absorber on Friday, the MP4 had run trouble-free throughout practising. Designer John Barnard was well pleased with the trouble and expense which the team had accepted in order to get the car back to England after Long Beach for the three days of post-Rio testing which Watson had completed at different English circuits.

The Belfast driver had soon got the handling through the critical high-speed curves of the number 15 circuit to his satisfaction, and had qualified the superb-looking new machine 11th place. *"He was catching Rene Arnoux and Alan Jones after the start,"* said a happy-looking Ron Dennis, joint MD of McLaren International, *"in fact for 30 laps he was running at exactly the same speed as Alain Prost, who finished 2nd."*

The vibration could not be immediately traced, for a quick change of tyres failed to make an improvement, and Watson returned to the pits after only one additional lap. *"The important thing,"* said Dennis, *"is that we seem to have got ourselves a competitive race car."*

ARROWS TO BALESTRE

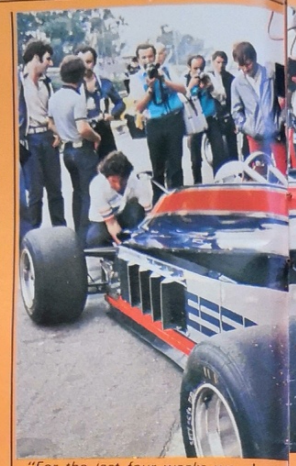
Ground clearance is currently a much-used expression in Grand Prix racing. There's a lot of talk about it, and a lot of suspicion concerning it. So during practice for the Argentine Grand Prix, the officials did their own bit of scrutineering in the pit entry road. Every time a car came into the pits, it had to pass over a board so that the its ground clearance could be checked. If it didn't clear the six centimeter board, the fastest time just set would not be accepted.

Not surprisingly this system rather upset the smooth running of practice and some drivers like Laffite and Jones got annoyed with it. Three cars failed the six centimeter test: those of Patrese, de Angelis and Pironi. But their times were reinstated when it was found that the board itself didn't conform to the regulations!

Meanwhile, Jean-Marie Balestre of FISA had spoken on Argentine television that the Arrows, Ferrari and Lotus did not conform to the regulations. This angered the Ragno-Arrows team which put out one of the many press releases to appear during the Argentine Grand Prix. It accused the M. Balestre of "usurping the powers of the scrutineer." The atmosphere-became a little more tense.

LOTUS-ESSEX PLAY THEIR FINAL CARD?

Chapman and his sponsors, Essex Petroleum, may have already played their final card in issuing the following press release. They threaten to pull out of Grand Prix racing altogether if the car is definitely banned. Here are the main points of their communique:



"For the last four weeks we have been trying to get the new Essex-Lotus 88 to take part in a Grand Prix, to no avail

Twice it was accepted by the scrutineers, twice it was turned down by the stewards under pressure of lobbies. The U.S.A. national Court of Appeal ruled this new car eligible and gave a firm recommendation it should be allowed to race, it was still forced off the track by protesters and the black flag.

And now we have been turned down again from participating in the Argentine Grand Prix, even though the Argentine Automobile Club's technical commission commented on the innovative design it features and the worthiness of its technological advances.

At no time throughout this ordeal has any steward or scrutineer come up with a valid reason for the exclusion consistent with the content and intention of the rule.

Throughout these years, we have witnessed the changes which have taken place in Grand Prix racing and unfortunately seen what was fair competition between sportsmen degenerate into power struggles and political manœuverings between manipulators and money men attempting to take more out of the sport than they put into it.

For the first time since I started Grand Prix racing, 22 years ago, I shall not be in the Team Lotus pit during a race for this reason.

During this period no team has won more races, more championships than we have, nobody has influenced the design of racing cars the way we did, through innovations which are already finding their way into everyday motor cars, for the benefit of increased safety and energy conservation.

And yet we are being put under the unbearable pressure by our rival competitors who are frightened that once again we are setting a trend they may all have to follow.

The matter shall go to its next stage at the F.I.A. Court of Appeal in two weeks time. We shall defend our case with all the arguments we can muster for the defence of a cause we consider worthy.

When this will be over I shall seriously reconsider with my good friend and sponsor David Thieme of Essex Motorsport whether Grand Prix racing is still what it purports to be: the pinnacle of sport and technological achievement. Unfortunately, this appears to be no longer the case and if one does not clean it up, Formula 1 shall end up in a quagmire of plagiarism, chicanery and petty rule interpretation forced by lobbies manipulated by people for whom the word sport has no meaning."

Colin CHAPMAN
Buenos Aires, April 10th 1981 9a.m.

FISA REPLY TO CHAPMAN

During this press conference, M. Balestre became confused and was scarcely convincing. At times one wasn't certain whether he was talking about the Lotus or the Brabham, and he got bogged down in complicated explanations which missed the more important points. Then he quickly brought his press conference to a close, even though many journalists still had a number of important questions to ask. According to M. Balestre, the battle that split Formula One is over. It is the journalists who are responsible for the current problems. We don't think we're guilty, and in all good faith, we are reprinting the FISA president's most recent press release in which he explains is association's position.

"A communique from ESSEX MOTORSPORT (Headquarters: winter sporting Monaco) released to the International Press discredits the World Championship. The FISA's duty is to defend its licence holders (be they officials or competitors) whenever they are the object of attacks and untruths of such a serious nature, and to have the world championship regulation respected.

In the ESSEX MOTORSPORT COMMUNIQUE in spite of it signature, we no longer recognize the style which Colin Chapman has accustomed us to for many years, but rather that of his usual advisors who, over the past few weeks, seem to have lost all self-control.

This communique presents Colin Chapman as the only idealistic constructor and the only inventor of genius in Formula 1, as the victim of a huge conspiracy led by: We quote, lobbies, degenarate sportsmen, politicians and money men who manipulate the stewards and the race officials.

The FISA reminds you that the only pressure group which started the LOTUS T.88 affair is composed of Renault, WILLIAMS, FERRARI, ALFA-ROMEO, TALBOT-LIGIER, BRAHAM, MACLAREN and OSELLA who first lodged a protest at the Long Beach GRAND PRIX in respect of the Sporting Code. In the eyes of the FISA these constructors are entitled to the same respect as Mr Chapman and for many years the contribution of some of them to Motorsport has been at least as import as the one of Mr Chapman and ESSEX MOTOR SPORT.

It is funny to see ESSEX MOTORSPORT whose operation center is in Monaco and whose shows have never given the slightest hint of poverty talk about business manœuvres and financial power. The FISA who for these past five days has followed and controlled all the actions of the officials and stewards of the Grand Prix of Argentina guaranties their absolute integrity their honesty and total independance.

Mr Chapman is right on one point: FISA put Pressure on the stewards of the G.P. of Argentina. As a matter of fact it attempted to convince them to show indulgence as regards the LOTUS T.88 and to apply the suspend sentence clause on account of the new fact which intervened after Brazil constituted by the constituted by the indicial decision of the convening of the international court of appeal of the FIA on April 23rd (in 12 Days).

As usual when a high court is convened to examine a case the parties must abstain from any inopportune public intervention and submit themselves with discretion to the authority of the Judges.

When signing the Concord agreement Mr Chapman undertook to respect this. He has just breached this undertaking in a scandalous manner

As a result the FISA has decloed to send on the ESSEX MOTORSPORT communique to the FISA Court for it to be included in the LOTUS 88 Dossier and to plead as the civil party before the aforesald Court.

Furthermore for breaching in particular chapter XV, Art. 151 (c), Art. 58 and in pursuance of article 152 of the sporting Code and the Concorde agreement, FISA has informed Team ESSEX MOTORSPORT LOTUS that it has inflicted a 100.000 dollars fine independantly from any sanction that the FISA Executive Committee meeting to which this affair has been transmitted on April 16th may take."

THE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE?

by Mike DOODSON

Hidden away in the breakfast room of Buenos Aires' crypt-like Plaza Hotel on the morning after his fourth Grand Prix victory, Nelson Piquet imagined that he was safe from the attentions of the voracious local media. Dark hair tousled, he was quietly buttering a roll and removing the foil from a portion of honey when a greasily ingratiating Argentine man interrupted him in mid-sentence. *"Por favor, Señor Piquet, una entrevista sobre su gran triunfo de ayer,"* said the man, looking exactly like one of those appalling detergent salesmen from the TV commercials of the bad old days. *"No,"* said Nelson when he could ignore the interruption no more: *"I am already talking to someone."*

It didn't do any good. Within five minutes, Mr Soap Salesman was back with a TV crew and klieg lights, bowing and scraping with all the grace of a mortician trying to persuade the next of kin to accept embalming in addition to the brass casket.

Nelson responded with a scowl. No doubt to the frustration of his interviewer, he answered all the questions in straight Portuguese. For some reason, Argentines cannot understand the language of their big neighbour Brazil, although Brazilians don't have too much trouble with the Argentines' Spanish. Brazilians aren't too popular in Argentina, and Piquet's victory here - a stupefying 26.6 seconds ahead of Carlos Reutemann - hadn't done anything to improve relations between the two countries. The notoriously partisan *tuercas* packed into the Parque Almirante Brown the previous afternoon had reacted to Piquet with a lack of sportsmanship which had only been exceeded by their disgusting response to Alan Jones.

"Five laps or so from the end of the race, someone threw an orange at my car," said Nelson, *"just before the Tobogan. They made a good calculation. Fortunately I had slowed down: otherwise it might have hit me in the face. At that speed, you can imagine the result..."*

If you set aside assaults by orange, the obscenities of the *tuercas* and the rudeness of the local TV, there was only one word to describe Piquet's victory in Argentina. Easy. When Nelson had arrived in Argentina he was feeling far from well. But the hydro-pneumatic suspension fitted to his car had been perfected, and the flexible side skirts were working perfectly. *"I could have done the whole race again three times more,"* he insisted: *"I was backing off so much at the end that the mechanics listening in the pits were worried that my engine was giving trouble."*

In Long Beach, where the Brabham system had been revealed for the first time, Frank Williams had publicly congratulated his rivals on their ingenious solution (and immediately started work on a similar arrangement for Jones and Reutemann).

"You can say that we now have about 80 per cent of the downforce that we had last year," admits Piquet. *"The other people have maybe 30 or 40 per cent. Of course, I knew that my car was better than anyone else's here. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday we tested on full tanks all the time, four full sessions of practice. The only session when we had empty tanks was on Friday, when I did my pole position time. I knew that I could win. The car was one second and a half quicker than anyone else on full tanks. I knew that Rebaque in the other car would have no trouble to come 2nd."*

So much for the famous ban on skirts, introduced in the name of safety. As far as Piquet is concerned, the ban has made the cars more dangerous to drive. *"If you go over a bump in the middle of a corner, sometimes the car changes its reactions very quickly, you cannot predict it. That's because there is a sudden leak from under the skirts. Driving the cars is much more difficult now because you don't have the same consistent reaction from the car in every corner.*

"A place like this circuit in Buenos Aires is very smooth. But if we took these cars to a bumpy track like Interlagos, it would be really dangerous. You saw in Rio how many cars went off the road over the bumps? Rio, fortunately, is a very safe circuit. But we will have some trouble later in the year, that is sure."

For Nelson, there were no worries, not even when Jones got in front for a short period. *"He made a very good start. In the first corner I saw him in almost exactly the same position that we were in on the first lap at Montreal last year. I didn't want to risk an accident like that again, so I just lifted off. I knew we had more speed than anyone. Our speed traps had told us already during practice. We were a minimum of 5 mph faster than the Williams on the straight, we were even a bit quicker than the Renaults, although of course they have better acceleration. I just went past Alan on the straight..."*

Piquet refuses to talk bout his championship chances, preferring to leave the question until mid-season. He recalls the early season dominance of the Ligiers two years ago as a reminder not to make predictions too soon. The Brabham team has a lot of work in front of it at present, not least of all the BMW-engined turbocar, the racing version of which, to be known as the Brabham BT50, will be ready soon after Imola.

Perhaps the most important question mark hangs over the tyres which will be available to his te am for the remainder of the year. Significantly, the press was chased out of the Brabham garage after the race to enable Nelson to talk tyres with Michelin engineer Pierre Blanchet. And like Blanchet, Piquet hopes that everyone will be able to stay on Michelin's excellent radial ply tyres. *"If they can arrange to supply everyone, it will be fantastic,"* he says *"because that will be one problem less not only for us but also for the smaller teams like Ensign and Theodore.*

"Of course, it will be very disappointing for Ferrari and Renault. But Michelin now is afraid to lose the English teams. Ferrari is in the shit. Renault is, too, they're not going really well. On a circuit like here, where they should have won, they could only come 3rd. And they're going to be in trouble on some of the tighter circuits. Alfa Romeo is in difficulties. And Ligier... well, they aren't in a position to win for Michelin, are they?"

By Imola, several teams, including Williams, will have copied the Brabham suspension and skirts. But the Brabham team, subject only to appeals from Williams and Renault, has the experience of two race meetings with the ingenious set-up.

And with only eight points separating him from Reutemann in the world championship (five points from Jones), Nelson Piquet is already making up the ground which was so foolishly lost to him in his own country. □

GORDON MURRAY GETS ANGRY

By rights, Murray should have been able to leave Argentina with a clear conscience and the satisfaction of a job well done. Nelson Piquet had taken pole position effortlessly. His Brabham BT49 was already perfectly set up in readiness for tomorrow's race, for the team had been so confident no one would be quicker on today's slightly slower track that they had devoted the entire session to full tank tests.

Yet fastest lap in practice - and the prospect of an easy race victory to follow - was not enough to wipe the annoyance

from the face of the British engineer, whose expression was distinctly annoyed. The truth was that Gordon Murray felt almost victimised as a result of the suspicion with which his car was being regarded. Its hydro-pneumatic suspension and flexible side skirts had attracted accusations of "cheat" and "rule bender." Quite clearly, it was not only a wing car: its controversial technology also made it virtually unbeatable.

It was hardly right to blame Nelson Piquet. *"My job,"* he said calmly, *"is to drive the car, not design it."* Yet he was understandably delighted to be in league with Murray. Team owner Bernie Ecclestone declined to comment, on the grounds that it was a technical matter which he didn't fully understand.

The target of all the vilification, therefore, was Murray.

The regulations require that *"at any time all suspended parts of the car must be no less than 6 cm from the ground."* And Murray insists that not a single car in Buenos Aires for the GP could claim to meet this requirement. Furthermore, another rule demands that checks on the ground clearance should be carried out when the car is stationary. When checked, the gap between the Brabham and the ground was always well over 6 cm. As a result, it met the rules in every way possible.

It was this clear contradiction in the rules which had been so beautifully exploited by Murray. It was also the cause of the general discontent elsewhere. The most outspoken of all the critics was Frank Williams, whose first protest against the BT49, on Friday evening, had already been thrown out by the stewards. *"I'm the only one who had the balls to put in a protest,"* he said with bitterness.

For Murray, the protest was the straw that broke the camel's back. On top of the whispered complaints, Frank's action provoked this normally quiet and courteous engineer into a tirade of unexpectedly angry retorts. Possibly it was the knowledge that the Williams team had unsuccessfully made their own, similar system (and tested it unsuccessfully at Rio) that lay behind Frank's change of heart. He had, after all, congratulated Murray publicly on his system when he first saw it at Long Beach.

"I saw him rushing around the paddock yesterday," said Murray. *"For three hours he was trying to get everyone worked up about what he calls the illegality of our car. He's getting me very upset: it's going to be difficult in future for us to get on well together from now onwards."*

Then he gives away the insult which he feels most keenly. *"Patrick Head knows as well as I do that no material except ceramic has the ability to resist being dragged along the road at 150 mph without wearing away. Nothing, not even special plastics. And they have the nerve to accuse me of fitting skirts which drag on the road! They don't: they're more like 2 cm off the ground ...and everyone else is trying to get the same effect."*

Whatever happens to the protests, Nelson Piquet must now be considered number one candidate for the 1981 championship, so long as the Brabham suspension continues to be tolerated. As Jean-Pierre Jabouille, that most technical of racing drivers, observes: *"Their system is already reliable. It works perfectly. They must have been working on it for a long time. My opinion is that they're already three months ahead of the rest of us."* □

Eric BHAT

Gordon Murray's trick suspension may be a success on the track, but it certainly isn't popular in the pits.

Hector Rebaque drove his best ever race, with lots of help from his Brabham. Not even World Championship leaders Jones and Reutemann could make any impression on the Mexican.

A $ 100,000 DOLLAR FLY IN THE SOUP

Stunned by the rejection of his trend-setting Essex Lotus T88 by the Argentine Automobile Club stewards in Buenos Aires, Colin Chapman took an early flight home to England. Behind him, however, he left a press statement which made up in emotion what it lacked in good grammar. To the astonishment of the competing teams, the statement brought down a fine on Lotus which will surely go into the Guinness book of sporting records.

Down a filthy side street alongside the decrepit main railway station in Buenos Aires there is a restaurant called La Mosca Blanca ("The White Fly"). When the Grand Prix circus is in town, La Mosca Blanca with its bossy waiters, extensive menu and undeniably excellent food becomes a rendez-vous for drivers, team owners and mechanics.

On the Thursday evening before the Grand Prix this year, one of the tables, obscured by a pillar, was occupied by an earnest looking party of English people. At their head was Colin Chapman, not relaxed as usual but wearing a frown. Over dinner he was holding a council of war with three of his closest advisers: his wife Hazel, his racing engineer Peter Wright, and his long-time confidant, Franch journalist Gérard "Jabby" Crombac.

Your correspondent, accompanying a party of Brazilian journalists, was directed by chance to the next table. While the Lotus chief was in the process of settling his bill, the Brazilians attracted his attention.

"Whatever happened to that interview we did in Rio?" asked Chapman. *"Sorry,"* we replied, *"but you insisted on checking it before it was published. The Editor decided that he couldn't accept conditions like that."*

Chapman, who needs favourable publicity at the present time more than ever before, tried to explain: *"too many inaccurate articles have appeared above my name in the past for me to permit it. There is not a single journalist that I feel I can trust."* Needless to say, the ensuing exchange included a vigorous defence of the fifth estate. But proof of Chapman's allegations became available the following afternoon, when a press release was issued over his own signature purporting to explain his disappointment and frustration with the rejection of the Essex-Lotus T88 - for the third time at three Grands Prix - by officials of the organising club. In fractured English which could only have been written by a Frenchman (presumably a long-time confidant), the statement ended with a PS: *"When you shall read this," I shall be on my way to watch the progress of the US Space-Shuttle, an achievement of human manking (sic) which will refresh my mind from what I have been subjected to in the last four weeks."*

Point taken, Mr Chapman. Never trust a journalist.

Among the several other inaccuracies in the release was the suggestion that Chapman, who had left Buenos Aires on Saturday accompanied by his wife and Peter Wright, would be absent from the Team Lotus pit during a GP *"for the first time in 22 years."* But there was no indication more blatant than his absence that Chapman, like some others, was becoming dispirited by Formula 1 racing.

The discouragement was reflected in the grim look of François Mazet of Essex Motorsport, representing Essex boss David Thieme (who has missed all four GPs in which Team Lotus has competed this year).

"Colin is obviously very frustrated," said Mazet, *"but David is, if anything, even more determined that the T88 will race. We're placing all our hopes on the fairness of the FISA tribunal which will hear the appeal against the Argentine decision in the week after the race."*

To the not inconsiderable embarrassment both of Essex and Lotus, however, an unpredictable Franchman had taken exception to the florid prose of the press release allegedly written by Chapman. In an involved statement written on the federation's paper, FISA President Monsieur Jean-Maris Balestre announced grandiosely that Chapman, *"in scandalous manner,"* had breached the Concorde Agreement and three articles of the FIA's sporting code. With all the subtlety of an air raid, M. Balestre announced: *"FISA has informed Team Essex Motorsport Lotus that it has inflicted a 100,000 dollars fine independently of any sanction that the FISA Executive Committee meeting to which this affair has been transmitted on April 16 may take."*

If Chapman's faith in the goodwill of his fellow constructors had been damaged by the campaign they have conducted against his twin sprung chassis Lotus T88, it would have been restored, partially at least, by their almost unanimous response to the news of the fine. In a simple statement which did not even draw attention to the fact that nowhere in his statement had Chapman criticised FISA, the Argentine Club or Monsieur Balestre (even by implication), they protested Balestre's handling of the affair and the "unrealistic fine" imposed. The only team which chickened out was Ferrari.

The question of the admissibility of the Lotus T88 is expected to have been settled by the time this issue of GPI is published.

The car has not been quick in the few public laps which it has been permitted to do during qualifying sessions for GPs, and there have been some alarming incidents for its driver Elio de Angelis, including another off-road moment during the tyre test session which took place in Buenos Aires on the day before official practice.

But as one rival team manager said, *"there is no doubt that the 88 is potentially quicker than anything the other teams can produce. By separating the aerodynamic functions of the chassis from the handling, Chapman has built a car which will make the present superiority of the Brabham, for example, look like nothing. So far, I am convinced, the Lotus people have been sandbagging."*

The objections of rival teams to the concept of the T88 remain. The most important argument against the car is that its aerodynamic downforce is transmitted directly to the suspension by means which the FISA (then called the CSI) effectively suppressed in 1969, on the grounds of safety. But others claim that since the rules of Formula 1 do not for example specifically forbid the use of two chassis, any interpretation in favour ot the Lotus might logically lead to some team attempting to build a car with two separate 3-litre engines (an interpretation which, equally, is not forbidden expressly in the rules).

But these suggestions are no more than polemics to those who would argue the future of motor racing over a couple of drinks down at the local. To Colin Chapman, on the other hand, the T88 represents an onerous investment on the future of which lies much more than the restoration of Lotus racing fortunes which have been moribund since 1979.

As he said on his way out of La Mosca Blanca, *"I am not just fighting for a car: I am also struggling for the future of my team and the support of my sponsor. In the long run, even, I may be fighting for the future of my entire business."* □

by Mike DOODSON

THE FILM OF THE RACE

Nelson Piquet's domination of the race was quite clear-cut and total throughout weekend. The Brazilian's teammate Hector Rebaque spent a little while sorting his way through the rest of the field. He was seventh on the first lap but climbed up to second place until a mechanical breakage deprived him of his best ever finish and a one-two for Brabham. Behind Piquet, the Williams and Renault teams picked up the best results, filling second to fifth positions.

1 - A rather less chaotic start than of late. Piquet and Jones get the best starts, Prost throws away his front row advantage.

2 - Rebaque was the hero of the opening laps. On the second lap he's sixth in front of Arnoux, Pironi, Watson and Rosberg.

3 - Hector continues his climb through the field. He's just about to take third place off Prost on the 11th lap.

4 - There's only one more rival for the Brabham number two to overtake: Carlos Reutemann. On the 15th lap, Hector moves into second place behind Piquet.

5 - There's an interesting battle further back: Watson tries to take sixth place off Arnoux, but it's in vain.

6 - Another interesting point is Tambay's long struggle to keep his sick Theodore in front of de Angelis's Lotus. The Italian overtakes on lap 35.

7 - Nelson and Carlos have been on the rostrum before, but it's Alain's first visit.

Right from the start of official practice, Nelson Piquet was the fastest man on the track. He was 0.3s quicker than Alain Prost in the first session, even though the Frenchman had appeared to be fastest after Thursday's unofficial sessions. Piquet's time was to assure him pole position. Nothing seemed capable of stopping the Brabhams, for the often uncompetitive Rebaque was seventh fastest. The Renaults were also competitive, Prost and Arnoux second and fourth fastest times respectively. Reutemann was the third man on form during the first session, setting third fastest time in this first session. Jones was only sixth quickest behind a surprising Villeneuve whose time was the only bright spot in a day when the Ferrari team broke two engines. Patrese was eighth fastest which he reckoned about right: not far behind the Williams and Brabhams as at Rio, but then there were the Renaults in there as well. John Watson was ninth fastest although he expected to be a little quicker after unofficial practice when the new McLaren had proved to be very competitive.

Rain over night and wind the next day combined to make the track rather slower on Saturday. Piquet gambled that no one would go quicker and decided to set his car up for the race. In fact among the front runners, only Jones succeeded in improving his time and slotting his car on the second row, bumping his own teammate Reutemann to the third row. Arnoux also improved and was quicker than Villeneuve.

RACE

Piquet made a superb start and was very qickly in the lead and dominating a race that he would lead virtually from start to finish. Prost, on the other hand, made a poor get away and was only sixth after the first lap. So the order was the following: Piquet, Jones, Reutemann, Patrese, Arnoux and Prost, followed by Pironi, Rosberg and Watson.

Piquet was already two seconds in front at the end of the second lap, ahead of Jones and Reutemann who had pulled away from Patrese who in turn was followed closely by Prost. He'd just overtaken Arnoux and Rebaque was about to do likewise.

To the accompaniment of an enormous round of applause from the crowd, Reutemann took second place from Jones on the third lap. The reigning World Champion had injection trouble and began to slip back. Alain Prost and Hector Rebaque continued to make progress in front of Arnoux. Further back, de Angelis and Surer who had been 11th and 12th until then, dropped back following an incident in the chicane. Tambay and Andretti went very well early on, occupying tenth and eleventh places even though they'd been much further back on the grid.

Piquet completely dominated the race. During the opening laps, he pulled away at the rate of two seconds lap. He was 16s in the lead on the tenth lap but then he began to ease up, knowing that victory was virtually assured, so that he only pulled out half a second a lap on his pursuers. The pursuers were first of all led by Reutemann who simply could do nothing about Rebaque who took third place off Prost on the eleventh lap, and passed the Argentine four laps later. The Brabhams were in front, and it seemed that no one could do anything about it.

But unfortunately, Rebaque's moments of glory were short-lived. He retired shortly after half distance with a broken distributor cap. So Reutemann was back in second place in front of Prost, Jones, Arnoux and Watson, none of them particularly worrying the other. Unfortunately the Ulsterman wasn't to go much further, vibrations causing a pit stop on the 35th lap.

From the on, then first five places remained completely unaltered, Piquet crossing the line the winner in front of Reutemann, Prost, Jones and Arnoux. It wasn't at all certain who would finish sixth however. Once Watson had retired, Patrese took over sixth, but the Arrows driver was also suffering from vibration so the de Angelis, Tambay, Andretti trio began to catch him.

De Angelis had been charging through the field superbly after his earlier delay and overtook Tambay at virtually the same moment that Watson retired. He then continued to catch Patrese and took sixth place off him six laps from the end. □

TALBOT-LIGIER :

Guy Ligier's departure did not go unnoticed on Friday evening. The French team patron was grumbling more than ever as he slowly and sadly walked across the paddock after the first qualifying session. Even his suitcase on wheels that he trailed behind him looked like a beaten dog. It was a sad and depressing sight.

Ligier had only arrived in Buenos Aires a couple of days before, yet he was already on his way before things could get any worse in the team which used to bear his name. Jacques Laffite was 17th on the provisonal grid, and Jean-Pierre Jabouille was only 28th and currently non-qualified. *"Oh well, it's going to be a disaster"*, sighed the former rugby player as he beat his retreat.

Guy Ligier was probably right to quit. Things were even worse the next day. Laffite was only 21st on the grid, with a place on the penultimate row, while Jabouille wouldn't even see the red light turn green. For the first time in his Grand Prix career, he'd failed to qualify. It wasn't his recovering ankle that had held him up, the problems were more complex and numerous than that.

"We'd do better to run away and hide," joked Jacques Laffite the evening after practice. *"I've never been so badly off in Grand Prix racing, even when I was with Williams, apart from the time I didn't qualify at Monaco. I've always been higher than 21st on the grid. But there's a time for everything."*

"We've never come up against such a brick wall as we have this weekend," echoed Lionel Hublet, Gerard Ducarouge's assistant with technical responsibility. *"The problem is that we don't know what the problem is! It isn't a problem of organisation. Yesterday, the cars weren't very quick in a straight line so we took off wing to get them through the air faster. Yet the more wing we took off, the slower they went. It's amazing, it just doesn't make sense."*

Both drivers were held up by this slow straight line speed. *"They've lost 600 revs on the straight in comparison to yesterday,"* explained Gérard Ducarouge. *"They're getting up to 11,200 revs at the start of the straight and never get any further. And now we're running with less downforce than ever."*

The question was obviously what was causing this? Was it the wind for instance, which was blowing quite hard in the opposite direction to the cars travelling down the straight? Yet the Ligiers were losing a lot more on the straights than most of the others.

Was it the cars themselves? *"The Ligier JS17 in its current form certainly isn't very quick,"* admitted Gérard Ducarouge. There was no doubt about this statement being correct. The JS 17 had certainly not dominated either of the two preceding races.

So was it the engines? They'd been changed the previous evening after the first practice session. But there was certainly a different noise from the V12 Matras throughout Saturday, and it wasn't a very happy noise. It wasn't a clear ring, it was deeper and hoarser than usual. This seemed perceptible only to the ear, because it didn't seem to affect the drivers. *"Jacques says he feels nothing wrong with the engine,"* confirmed Ducarouge, *"there doesn't seem to be a lack of power nor a lack of torque. But if the engines are making a different noise, then something has to be wrong."*

Once the Matra men had checked all the possible causes for this change in engine note, they began to suspect Marelli's ignition system which was already in doubt as Alfa Romeo were in electrical trouble and that team uses the same system. *"You can tell the Alfa and Matra 12 cylinder engines coming by on the straight, you can hear them from miles away,"* said Jean-François Robin.

These engine problems plus the handling problems with the JS17 itself combined to depress the Ligier men. And the race itself scarcely gave rise to greater hopes. Jacques retired without ever having featured. But he's a happy sort of fellow, and tried to make light of the situation by exaggerating it. *"I tell you Gerard, you've got to quit altogether. Your car is lousy, go home, you couldn't even run a Formula Renault team"*. Then he turned to Georges Martin, the man in charge of the engine department at Matra, and added, *"when we stopped using your engines, we began to win races. Now we're using your engines again, we've stopped winning!"*

Jean-Pierre Jabouille is ever the deep thinker and analyst. He came up with his answer: *"We're so slow that we're going to fit two engines. After all, Lotus have two chassis."*

Jean-Pierre kept his spirits up in spite of his depressing experience. After all, this was his first real attempt to get onto the grid since his accident in Canada last year, but he derived a little hope from it. *"I just don't have any luck. I've tried to make my comeback at a time when the team is at is worst. But not qualifying isn't that bad in itself. It happened last year to Scheckter and he'd just won the World Championship. If Jacques had been one of the fastest on the grid, then I might have wondered. What is serious is that we're not making any headway. We just can't carry on like this."*

The French team is now trying hard to trace the aerodynamic problem which held them up in South America. And Matra's men are working hard to find exactly what was wrong with the V12 engine. Talbot, meanwhile, continue to pay, perhaps a little jealous of Renault's success.

"What worries me," said a once more serious Laffite, *"is that we've got to move fast between now and Imola. We've only got three weeks in which to do the job."*

Shortly before leaving Argentina, Guy Ligier made his thoughts known to a commercial radio station. *"The car is new and we're using a new engine in it and new tyres on the wheels. I knew that this would be a transitory season, but I didn't think it would be quite so catastrophic."*

E.B.

DE ANGELIS SUCCEEDS WITH A HEAVYWEIGHT

Generally speaking drivers and designers alike are happier when their cars are right down on the weight limit. The slightest excess weight is trimmed off any car so that the engine has less to push around the circuit. But there are some cars on some circuits that behave better when set up for the race with full fuel tanks than they do when going for a sprint lap in practice with almost empty tanks. Elio de Angelis discovered that the Lotus 81 was happier this way at Rio.

Elio's weekend up to Sunday morning had been thoroughly depressing. The 88 hadn't been very competitive, and then it had been forbidden to run yet again, so Elio once again had to climb into his 81. He didn't do badly during practice and found himself tenth on the grid. But Elio didn't really think that this was sufficient to do well in the race, and he wasn't too hopeful. Without their team patron, the Lotus team seemed rather lost.

Perhaps it was desperation or frustration, but the young Roman driver had one of the best races of his Grand Prix career.

But it was neither desperation nor frustration that pushed him throughout the race. It was something more solid. During the warm-up he'd run his Lotus 81 with full tanks and on race settings, and had found himself third fastest. Clearly he could do well in the race.

He was astonished. *"It's amazing,"* he said after the warm-up, *"the car goes better with full tanks than it does when it's empty. We haven't got any soft springs here which allow the car to sit down and minimise the gap between side pods and ground. But the weight of the fuel pushes down the car and improves its ground effect. I must be half a second quicker around the tigher corners."* So with more weight, better ground effect and improved grip, the Lotus was cornering quicker. Now Elio was feeling a lot happier.

But on the third lap of the race, his hopes took a dive. As he and Surer braked for the chicane, neither was willing to give way and finally the Lotus and Ensign went skidding across the grass. De Angelis dropped from eleventh to 20th. It was almost too far down the field to salvage even a point, but de Angelis tried as hard as he could for the next fifty laps. Apart from Tambay, he swept past all those in front of him until he got up to sixth and out came the chequered flag. It was a superb drive, and he earned a well deserved point.

Buenos Aires statistics

ARGENTINE GRAND PRIX

Date: April 12, 1981
Circuit length: 3.708 miles
Race distance: 53 laps, 196.524 miles
Conditions: warm but overcast
Attendance: 120,000 spectators

THE RECORD

(last four races)

1977: Scheckter (Wolf WR1)
1978: Andretti (Lotus 78)
1979: Laffite (Ligier JS11)
1980: Jones (Williams FW07)

STARTING GRID

PIQUET
Brabham BT 49C
1'42"665

PROST
Renault RE 20/B
1'42"981

JONES
Williams FW07/B
1'43"638

REUTEMANN
Williams FW07/B
1'43"935

ARNOUX
Renault RE 20/B
1'43"997

REBAQUE
Brabham BT 49/C
1'44"100

VILLENEUVE
Ferrari 126C
1'44"132

ROSBERG
Fittipaldi F8
1'44"191

PATRESE
Arrows A3
1'45"008

DE ANGELIS
Lotus 81
1'45"065

WATSON
Marlboro MP4
1'45"073

PIRONI
Ferrari 126 C
1'45"108

CHEEVER
Tyrrell 010
1'45"117

TAMBAY
Theodore TY 01
1'45"297

MANSELL
Lotus 81
1'45"369

SURER
Ensign N 180B
1'45"734

ANDRETTI
Alfa Romeo 179
1'46"059

DE CESARIS
McLaren M 29C
1'46"663

STOHR
Arrows A3
1'46"444

SERRA
Fittipaldi F8
1'46"706

LAFFITE
Talbot Ligier JS17
1'46"854

GIACOMELLI
Alfa Romeo 179
1'46"918

LAMMERS
ATS D4
1'47"174

ZUNINO
Tyrrell 010
1'47"464

Non qualified:
GUERRA (Osella FA 1/B) 1'47"609
GABBIANI (Osella FA1/B) 1'48"121
DALY (March 811) 1'48"191
JABOUILLE (Talbot JS17) 1'49"581
SALAZAR (March 811) 1'51"086

TIMES IN UNOFFICIAL PRACTICE

THURSDAY MORNING		FRIDAY MORNING		SUNDAY MORNING	
Prost	1'43"895	Prost	1'44"438	Piquet	1'44"852
Arnoux	1'45"021	Piquet	1'44"597	Reutemann	1'45"034
Jones	1'45"541	Reutemann	1'44"840	De Angelis	1'45"895
Watson	1'45"794	Villeneuve	1'45"047	Prost	1'46"308
Piquet	1'46"195	Jones	1'45"080	Jones	1'46"346
Reutemann	1'46"465	Arnoux	1'45"192	Watson	1'46"384
Patrese	1'46"942	Rebaque	1'45"298	Arnoux	1'46"481
Giacomelli	1'47"399	Watson	1'45"302	Rebaque	1'46"783
Andretti	1'47"477	De Angelis	1'45"543	Patrese	1'47"227
Villeneuve	1'47"521	Pironi	1'45"732	Tambay	1'47"410
Cheever	1'47"660	Patrese	1'45"805	Rosberg	1'47"484
Mansell	1'47"798	Cheever	1'46"132	Pironi	1'47"513
Rosberg	1'48"172	Andretti	1'46"848	Cheever	1'47"534
De Angelis	1'48"314	Rosberg	1'47"417	Giacomelli	1'48"114
Lammers	1'48"647	Mansell	1'47"605	Andretti	1'48"114
De Cesaris	1'49"428	Surer	1'47"818	De Cesaris	1'48"155
Tambay	1'49"549	Laffite	1'47"903	Surer	1'48"234
Stohr	1'49"581	De Cesaris	1'47"949	Mansell	1'48"439
Rebaque	1'49"622	Zunino	1'48"329	Stohr	1'48"609
Gabbiani	1'50"114	Giacomelli	1'48"372	Lammers	1'48"618
Zunino	1'50"572	Serra	1'48"399	Serra	1'50"021
Guerra	1'50"697	Tambay	1'48"528	Villeneuve	1'56"100
Serra	1'51"208	Lammers	1'48"746	Laffite	1'59"160
Daly	1'51"277	Stohr	1'48"892	Zunino	2'21"160
Jabouille	1'58"077	Guerra	1'49"275		
Pironi	2'11"286	Jabouille	1'49"585		
Laffite	2'44"559	Gabbiani	1'49"912		
		Daly	1'50"647		
		Salazar	1'54"015		

THEIR FASTEST RACE LAPS

	Time	Lap n
Piquet	1'45"28	6
Reutemann	1'46"26	43
Rebaque	1'46"35	8
Prost	1'46"57	6
Jones	1'47"01	36
Arnoux	1'47"18	33
Watson	1'47"34	31
De Angelis	1'47"65	43
Tambay	1'47"86	30
Patrese	1'48"30	40
Giacomelli	1'48"32	37
Andretti	1'48"49	18
Stohr	1'48"83	28
Villeneuve	1'48"83	37
Surer	1'48"77	4
Rosberg	1'48"92	3
Zunino	1'49"01	33
Lammers	1'49"14	37
Pironi	1'49"22	2
De Cesaris	1'49"85	18
Serra	1'49"95	10
Laffite	1'50"06	5
Mansell	1'50"88	2
Cheever	3'05"30	1

TIMES IN UNOFFICIAL PRACTICE

	1st session	2cnd session
Piquet	**1'42"665**	1'44"364
Prost	**1'42"981**	1'43"748
Jones	1'44"662	**1'43"638**
Reutemann	**1'43"935**	1'44"094
Arnoux	**1'43"997**	1'44"080
Rebaque	1'44"712	**1'44"10**
Villeneuve	1'44"236	**1'44"1**
Rosberg	1'45"273	**1'44"191**
Patrese	**1'45"008**	1'45"357
De Angelis	1'45"252	**1'45"065**
Watson	**1'45"073**	1'45"202
Pironi	**1'45"108**	1'45"599
Cheever	**1'45"117**	1'45"357
Tambay	1'46"872	**1'45"297**
Mansell	**1'45"369**	1'45"790
Surer	**1'45"734**	1'46"188
Andretti	1'46"329	**1'46"059**
De Cesaris	**1'46"387**	1'46"663
Stohr	1'47"342	**1'46'444**
Serra	1'46"743	**1'46"706**
Laffite	**1'46"854**	1'47"594
Giacomelli	1'47"109	**1'46"918**
Lammers	**1'47"174**	1'47"576
Zunino	**1'47"464**	1'48"143
Guerra	**1'47"609**	1'48"571
Gabbiani	**1'48"121**	1'49"571
Daly	**1'48"191**	1'49"571
Jabouille	**1'49"581**	1'50"226
Salazar	—	1'51"086

PROVISIONAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIFICATION

1. Reutemann 21 pts - **2.** Jones 18 pts - **3.** Piquet 13 pts - **4.** Patrese and Prost 4 pts - **6.** Andretti, Surer and De Angelis 3 pts - **9.** Cheever and Arnoux 2 pts - **11.** Tambay and Laffite 1 pt.

CONSTRUCTORS CUP

1. Williams 39 pts - **2.** Brabham 13 pts - **3.** Renault 6 pts - **4.** Arrows 4 pts - **5.** Alfa, Ensign and Lotus 3 pts - **8.** Tyrrell 2 pts - **9.** Talbot-Ligier and Theodore 1 pt.

RESULTS

1. PIQUET	Brabham BT 49/C	53 laps in 1h34'32"74, 124.665 mph
2. REUTEMANN	Williams FW07/B	26"60 behind
3. PROST	Renault RE 20/B	49"98 behind
4. JONES	Williams FW07/B	1'07"87 behind
5. ARNOUX	Renault RE 20/B	1'31"85 behind
6. DE ANGELIS	Lotus 81	one lap behind
7. PATRESE	Arrows A3	one lap behind
8. ANDRETTI	Alfa Romeo 179	one lap behind
9. STOHR	Arrows A3	one lap behind
10. GIACOMELLI	Alfa Romeo 179	two laps behind
11. DE CESARIS	McLaren M29/C	two laps behind
12. LAMMERS	ATS D/4	two laps behind
13. ZUNINO	Tyrrell 010	two laps behind

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Postcard from Buenos Aires

Another Grand Prix, another girl looking like a film star... life is hard for photographers.

Welcome to Argentina: not even the greeting is inflation-proof in this very expensive country.

Even the drums are dressed up in Argentina.

Ah, the power of a red light and a uniform to stop a 500 bhp Formula One car when it's being pushed.

Just because she's advertising cigarettes and carrying an umbrella, there's no need to look at her like that...

Happy Birthday Lole, 30 candles for the most experienced Grand Prix driver.

Pit board story, how it changed from Rio to Argentina.

The Renaults lead: of course they do, it's a Formula Renault race, for cars using R4 engines.

Our advertising was written in large letters on the Buenos Aires track, but it was rather harder to write "Internacional."

Same advertising, different girls the world over.

You must be in there somewhere.

Some people are devoted to their music.

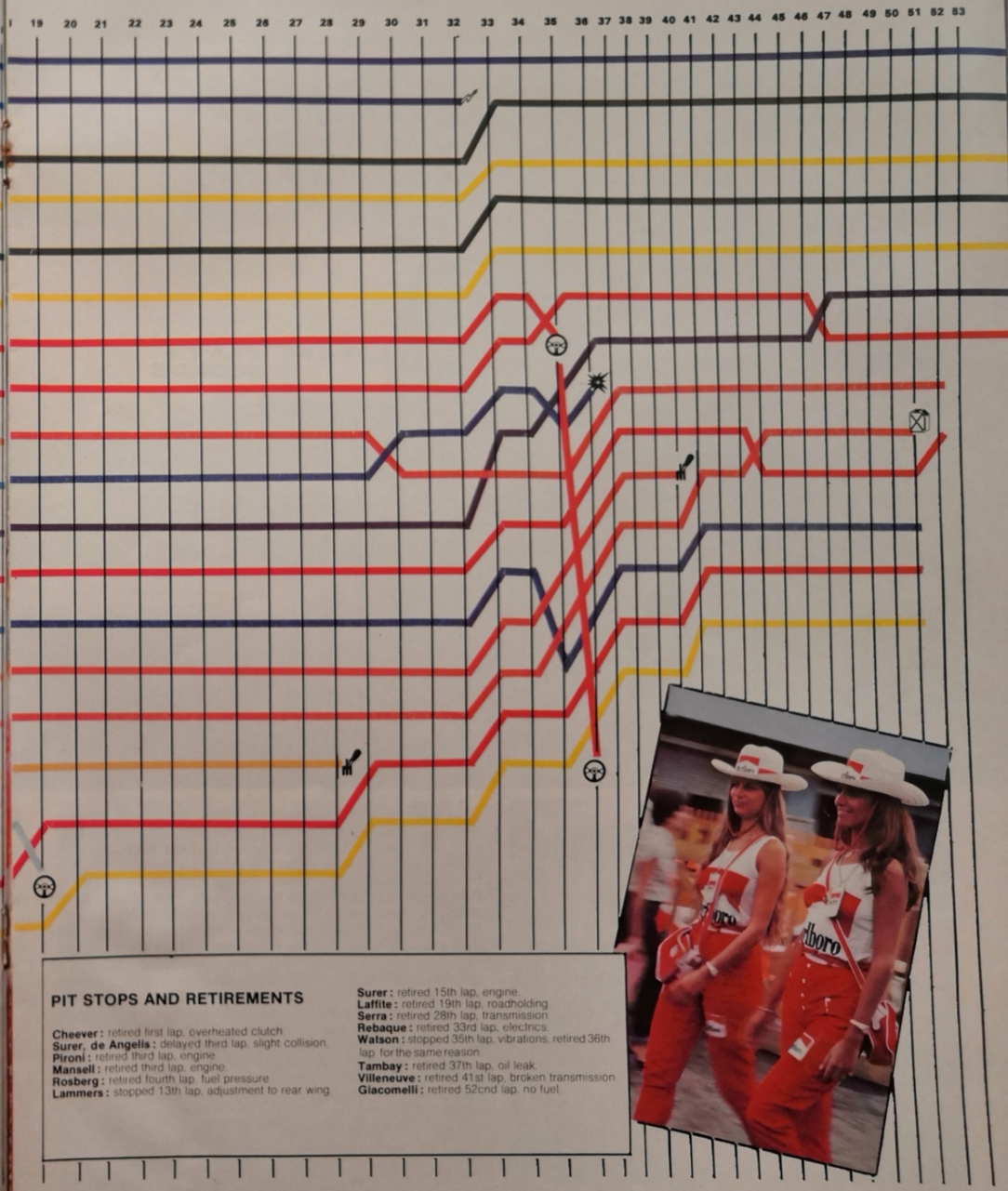
The police are out in force as usual.

It's those blue thighs again, what a colourful bunch.

Someone suggested that this might be Reagan's new bodyguard, but we know that she has a similar job looking after a racing driver. She's better looking than most of the police anyway.

Lap by lap - Giro per giro - Runde um Runde - Tour par tour - Vuelta a vuelta - Ronde

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
5 NELSON PIQUET (BR) Brabham BT 49 1
15 ALAIN PROST (F) Renault RE 20/B 2
1 ALAN JONES (AUS) Williams FW 07/B 3
2 CARLOS REUTEMANN (RA) Williams FW 07/B 4
16 RENE ARNOUX (F) Renault RS 20 5
6 HECTOR REBAQUE (MEX) Brabham BT 49/C 6
27 GILLES VILLENEUVE (CDN) Ferrari 126 C 7
20 KEKE ROSBERG (SF) Fittipaldi F8 8
29 RICCARDO PATRESE (I) Arrows A2/B 9
11 ELIO DE ANGELIS (I) Lotus 81 10
7 JOHN WATSON (GB) Mc Laren M29C 11
28 DIDIER PIRONI (F) Ferrari 126 C 12
3 EDDIE CHEEVER (USA) Tyrrell 010 13
33 PATRICK TAMBAY (F) Theodore TY 01 14
12 NIGEL MANSELL (GB) Lotus 81 15
14 MARC SURER (CH) Ensign N 181 16
22 MARIO ANDRETTI (USA) Alfa Roméo 179 17
8 ANDREA DE CESARIS (I) Mc Laren M29C 18
30 SIEGFRIED STOHR (I) Arrows A3 19
21 CHICO SERRA (BR) Fittipaldi F8 20
26 JACQUES LAFFITE (F) Ligier JS 11/15 21
23 BRUNO GIACOMELLI (I) Alfa Romeo 179 22
9 JAN LAMMERS (NL) ATS D4 23
4 RICARDO ZUNINO (RA) Tyrrell 010 24



PIT STOPS AND RETIREMENTS

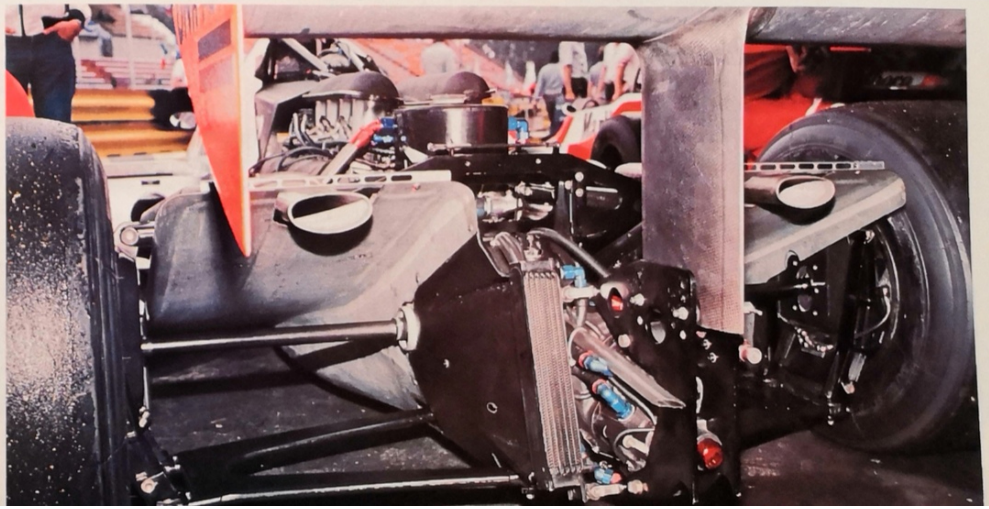
Cheever : retired first lap, overheated clutch.
Surer, de Angelis : delayed third lap, slight collision.
Pironi : retired third lap, engine.
Mansell : retired third lap, engine.
Rosberg : retired fourth lap, fuel pressure.
Lammers : stopped 13th lap, adjustment to rear wing.
Surer : retired 15th lap, engine.
Laffite : retired 19th lap, roadholding.
Serra : retired 28th lap, transmission.
Rebaque : retired 33rd lap, electrics.
Watson : stopped 35th lap, vibrations, retired 36th lap, for the same reason.
Tambay : retired 37th lap, oil leak.
Villeneuve : retired 41st lap, broken transmission.
Giacomelli : retired 52cnd lap, no fuel.

ap - Giro per giro - Runde um Runde - Tour par tour - Vuelta a vuelta - Ronde na ron

A PROJECT FOR SUCCESS

The McLaren Marlboro MP4 is the fruit of the association between McLaren Racing and Ron Dennis's Project Four. It's been a success from the start, perhaps not immediately on the track, but much admired in the paddock for its clean lines, its superb finish, and apparent aerodynamic finesse. John Barnard has been complimented on his car even before it's won a point.

Even Alain Prost whose departure from the McLaren team was scarcely a happy one congratulated his ex-teammate. "You car's quick, John." The Ulsterman smiled: "it's not as quick as your's but not bad all the same," he replied. Thursday afternoon's unofficial practice revealed that Watson's new car was quick. "It's feels comfortable and very easy to drive, very sweet," said John. The team is working hard on the car's development. Now everyone hopes that the MP4 will the car to make McLaren competitive again. Watson nearly scored a point at Buenos Aires, but he'd like to score nine, all at once, of course. (Photos A + P/Bernard Asset).



THE TORTOISES AND THE HARE

This was one of those tortoise and hare races. The real hare lasted only a couple of seconds on the track as it attempted to race along with the rest of them. But one Nelson Piquet was a fine substitute on the track. He simply left the rest as though they were tortoises. The quickest of the rest were most certainly the Williams.

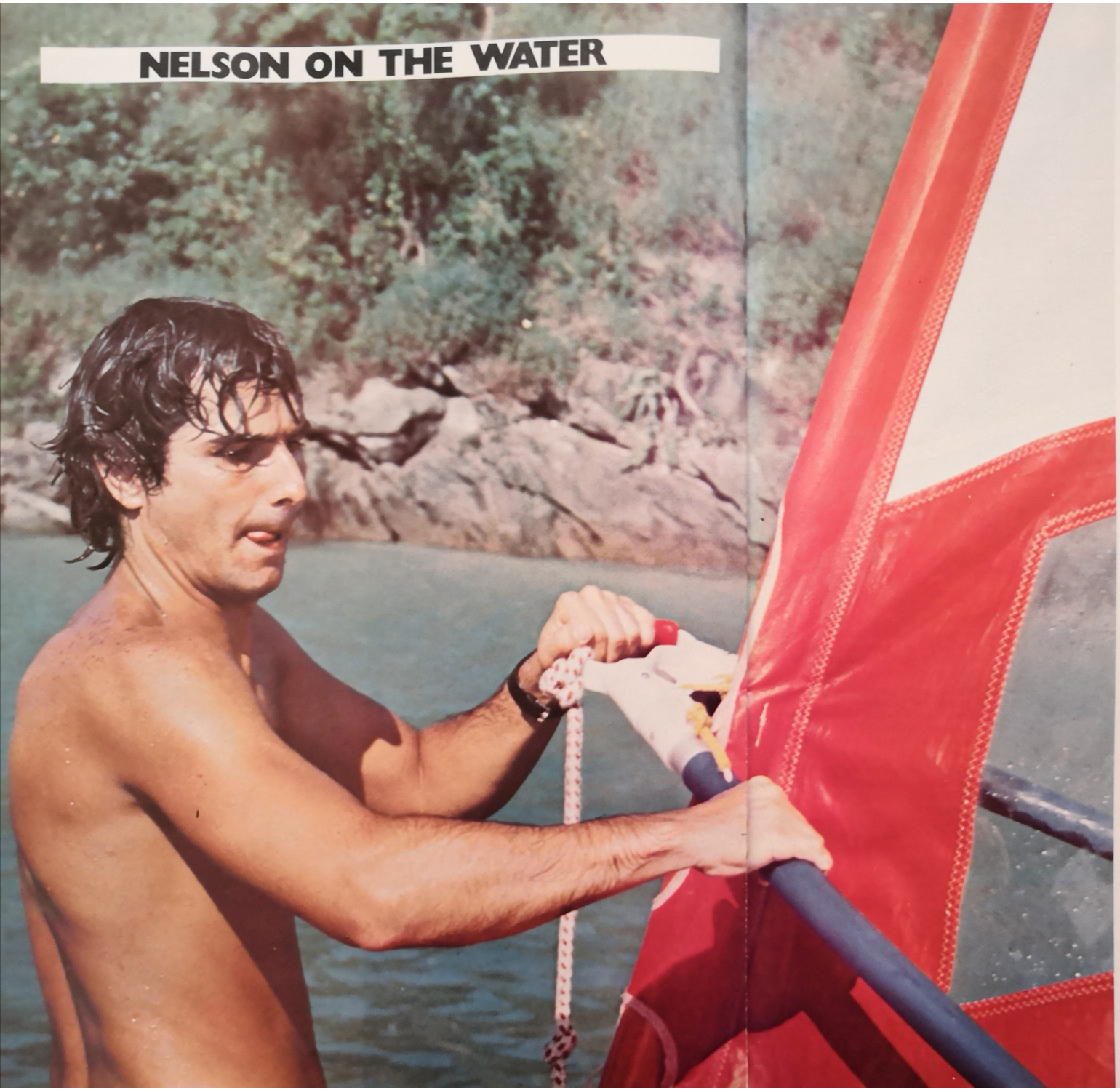
Carlos-Alberto Reutemann (pronounced Reoutemane if you were a local) and Alan Jones finished in second and fourth positions. As far as some people were concerned, the Argentine was the winner: after all, he was the first Argentine to finish and he was second, behind a car that was in a different class to the rest of them. Jones had his own problems with injection which rather took the fire out of his drive. But he wasn't that upset after the race: "I'm not going to make excuses because I don't like making excuses. It's just that things didn't turn out right today, but they will another day." But now the Williams drivers lead the World Championship, and Williams leads the Constructors series. In fact you can't really call the Williams tortoises at all. (Photos: SAM-DPPI François Beau - A + P Bernard Asset).

BOSS TALK

Günter Schmid, Jo Ramirez and Jan Lammers were the principal in the ATS team at Buenos Aires. Their French designer Herve Guilpin was back in England working on the new car which should make its debut at Imola. So the three in our accompanying picture were those working hard on the race car in Argentina.

It wasn't without its problems. The following story made the rounds of the paddock during practice. One day, on his arrival at the circuit, Schmid learned from Ramirez that Lammers was going to try a small rear wing. The patron exploded: "no, I forbid Jan to try the small rear wing. I set up the car and he'll use the large wing." Ramirez, taken aback, suggests "that we wouldn't lose much by trying the smaller wing." This doubles Schmid's fury: "I said no small rear wing." He seizes the small rear wing, and begins to destroy it. A driver for another team had this rather ironic comment to make: "a spoilt millionaire is in the act of breaking his toy." Jan Lammers managed to qualify with the large wing because he had no choice, but also in spite of going off the track because, "this car is understeering like as pig," explained the little Dutchman. He is discovering the problems of the ATS team patron, as many have before him. (Photo DPP 1/François Beau - A + P/Bernard Asset).

NELSON ON THE WATER



Sometimes it might seem that we portray a driver's life as being full of hassles: too much testing, travelling all the time, long hours in a plane, boring hours at a deserted track. But there are some happy moments in their lives. And we don't just mean when they're on the rostrum. Nelson Piquet invited his old Formula Three rival to stay with him in Brazil, and the two of them had a fine time enjoying the sort of thing that Nelson was known for: water sports. They swam, dived, sailed, windsurfed and took life easily. The Brabham team were also invited for a while. But Nelson was even happier the following Sunday when be won the Argentine Grand Prix

EDDIE CHEEVER

Eddie Cheever is perhaps everyone's idea of a racing driver He's handsome, fit, healthy, rich and married to a very pretty girl. Yet he's still only 24 and that must ensure him of a fine future. He's already proved that he's capable of running with the best of them, of overcoming some of the difficulties that modern racing drivers encounter with their machinery. Yet his own team manager, Ken Tyrrell, has been pleasantly surprised just how sensible and mature this young man has turned out to be. How does he envisage his own future?

by Giorgio PIOLA

You're now into your second full season of Formula One racing, having changed from Osella to Tyrrell. Why did you change teams?

I signed for Tyrrell for two principal reasons. The first was that I wanted to drive a car that was capable of finishing races. The Osella I drove last year may have been just as competitive as the Tyrrell, but because the team was relatively inexperienced, there was no guarantee that I would ever finish races. The second reason is allied to the first, but it's more a psychological reason. I feel more secure with Tyrrell, because I know that I'm in experienced hands. I'm sure that Osella are capable of making competitive cars, but the team needs experience. It was more risky for me to stay with Osella. It's also meant a little more money for me to move, but I assure you that that isn't a real reason for leaving Osella.

You talk about the risks of staying with Osella, but isn't it just as risky to leave a team that's making progress for one that is in decline?

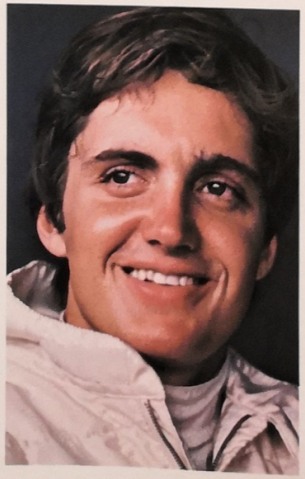
I'm certain that Tyrrell's current difficulties are not due to the team itself. Before I signed for the team, I went to see the factory, to talk with the design staff, and I watched the mechanics at work. I got the impression that there was tremendous potential within the team, and that's why I signed for Tyrrell.

You signed for Tyrrell relatively early, when the FISA-FOCA dispute was in full swing. In fact by signing, you plumped for FOCA.

All I did was to chose which team I was going to drive for without thinking about the politics involved. Like everyone else, I was scared that Formula One itself was suffering. I was not interested in the politics of the thing: I never have been and I don't think I ever want to be.

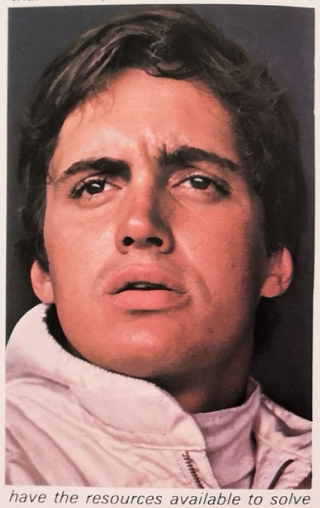
Even so, if it had come to a split, you would have been deemed a FOCA man, so what would have become of your drive with Lancia and the Beta Monte Carlo turbo?

I was pretty busy at the time, but I did not think that any split would have lasted too long. I never really thought that I'd lose the Lancia drive. I reckoned that the FISA-FOCA battle during the winter was a war of bluff on both sides, and that they'd agree to a compromise. There was too much money at stake for either side to risk losing altogether.



What have been your first impressions of the Tyrrell team?

I think we can solve the problems within the team. There are, perhaps, fewer problems within the Osella team than with Tyrrell, but the Italians don't have the resources available to solve them. Everyone is very experienced at Tyrrell. I think I can use that experience and pick up some good placings.



Do you feel as though you get on well with the Tyrrell people?

It takes a while to feel thoroughly at home within a team. I felt that way with Osella because I'd been with that team for three years.

How do you get on with Ken Tyrrell? Is he a tough team manager, or perhaps someone who tends to be more a father figure?

He's never got upset wit me. I made a very serious mistake in South Africa for example. I was lucky not to injure myself when I went off at the end of the straight. Ken didn't say anything to me. He simply asked me what had happened. I admitted my mistake and we left it at that. Ken takes a great interest in me, he's trying to help me. I'm young, ambitious and determined, and he's trying to harness my aggression. He's never said anything to depress me. He's always supported me in that way.

What are the differences between driving for an English team and an Italian team?

→

I've spent nearly all my life in Latin countries where the people openly express their emotion when they appreciate something good. The English are different. They're colder. I must say that when I drove for the Italian team, I really felt the emotions of the people around me. That isn't necessarily good for me, because I'm also rather emotional. Perhaps a cool and reserved team is better for me.

Ken Tyrrell says that you 're very good at communicating with engineers. How has this come about?

I've been racing for ten years: four years in karts and six in cars. I've naturally gained experience during that time. Furthermore, I learnt a lot while I was with Osella. When I first drove for him, he used to ask me a great deal, not simply about the car's handling, but also what was happening to the car at certain moments, or in certain corners. Nowadays I feel that I have a very good idea of what is going on with a car, without getting bogged down in unimportant details.

Are you interested in the technical problems of setting up a modern Formula One car?

Yes, I enjoy the technical side very much. When I started racing, I hated setting up cars, but I liked racing. Now the technical side interests me almost as much as the racing itself. Long Beach, for instance, was very satisfying. On the first day of practice we had a lot of problems and were only twelfth fastest. We made a lot of progress and ended up quite competitive. In such cases, one has to try a lot of different things. It's almost necessary to try two different set-ups and to try and compare them. You have to do a lot of thinking, the rapport between driver and engineer is very important.

Why did your early years in Formula One , three years ago, turn out to be such a disaster?

My first Formula One drive was in 1977 and comprised four days testing with Ferrari. My next Formula One drive was the Theodore, and that was a real disaster. In one jump I'd gone from best to worst. I suppose that at that time I was a little big headed because I was one of the best young drivers at that time. I'd done as much as a young driver could to.

Do you think you were ready for Formula One at that time?

As a driver, I was fast enough, I could drive a Formula One car. But as a man, I don't think that I was ready. I couldn't withstand the pressure that a Formula One driver is subjected to. In Formula Three or even Formula Two, you just have to drive. In Formula One there's a lot more besides.

Do you think that a mental attitude can harness basic aggression?

I think that using one's head is vital, because by doing so, I don't crash a lot and I don't break a lot of gearboxes etc. But that doesn't mean that I don't like fighting for a position. Everything that I've done has been in order to prepare myself for winning the World Championship, and to win the series when the opportunity presents itself: when I'm driving a decent car. So normally I think a lot, I use my head, but when there are only ten minutes of practice left, I switch off and drive as hard as I used to in Formula Two.

Do you feel that now you're driving for Tyrrell, you can win the World Championship, or do you feel that it's simply another step up the ladder to one of the currently competitive teams?

When I made my choice, it was the best opportunity that I had. It was another step up the ladder. I feel that I accomplish things with the Tyrrell team that I haven't been able to do before. I hope that we will have had some good results by the end of the year, particularly if Ken has found a sponsor.

Don't you find it worrying that the team isn't sponsored currently?

Of course I find it worrying, but if you decide to do something, you don't go back on your decision. When I got to Long Beach, Ken Tyrrell told me that he still hadn't found a sponsor and that he had enough money for only the first three races. Naturally, I wasn't too happy about that, but it was just another problem. It's an important problem, but even so, we're building a new car. We need good results. If I hadn't lost second gear at Long Beach, I would been able to stay with Piquet and perhaps even take third place off him. Even so, fifth place was a good result for us.

Ken Tyrrell joked that you were his sponsor because he wasn't paying you. But seriously though, what is your exact position within the team?

Ken does pay me in fact, and I get what I wanted. I also hope to get what I want and that's a load of good results. What I could earn this year is not very important. It's peanuts in comparison to what I could be earning in three years time if I continue to make progress.

What do you think are your faults and your good points?

I find that I have a number of faults. I'm very self-critical. But I think that if I was driving a Williams, I could quite easily win races from the front. Incidently, I don't really like dominating races like that. I prefer a good fight for the lead. I like having to drive hard because that's what I learnt when driving karts. Riccardo Patrese is the same. We've been racing against one another for nine years, we've been brought up in the same school.

What do you think of the pressure on current Formula One drivers?

I've never felt that pressure quite so much as I did at Long Beach. We didn't - and still don't - have a sponsor, so we had to do well in order to ease things for future races. The car was going well, but it had to go very well because I was an American in America. Throughout the week of the race, I was surrounded by TV and press all the time. I found it tremendously wearing.

So is it an advantage or inconvenient to be a youngster in Formula One?

It all depends on the age. If I'd driven for Ferrari at 18, that may have been too early. But now I feel that I'm ready. It's a bit like being a young lawyer who wants to appear in court now that he's qualified at university and done a year in an office. In terms of driving, I don't have any problems despite my age.

You've lived in Italy for a long time now. What do you think of the number of Italian drivers in Formula One? Are they another source of rivalry for you?

I don't care whether they're Italians or not. They're no different because they're Italian. I think of the other 23 drivers in a race as being the same; they're all rivals. However, I do think that the Italian drivers are tremendous competitors, and they compete as Italians against Italians. I'm not really great friends with any of the Italians but we know one another well, because we've been racing against one another for a long time, either in karts or Formula Three and Two. I may not be very friendly with the other Formula One drivers but we have a lot of fun together because we remember all the old races. There's a lot of competition among drivers, just as there is in anything of a competitive nature. The various team managers aren't really friends with one another.

But drivers are involved in the same sport, you're all out there on the track together and you live in the same hotels together. Surely this breeds friendship.

I would gladly give to a friend something that I really liked. I don't think that's possible in Formula One. I would never reveal to another driver any secret about the track or something like that. Rather than tell him that secret, I would prefer to tell him the opposite. There's tremendous rivalry between us all, and there's almost no limit to that rivalry.

What do you think of the other Formula One drivers when it comes to driving against them? Can you tell their different styles on the track?

There's a lot of difference between the technical side of things and the style of driving. I noticed it at Long Beach where I followed Villeneuve, Pironi and Piquet. Villeneuve was sliding everywhere, trying hard in all the corners, even though he may not have gone quicker in all of them. Pironi was half as hard as Villeneuve. He tried hard, but not everywhere. He pushed hard where he felt that it might give him an advantage. But Piquet was almost perfect. He only pushed hard in the corners where his car gave him an extra advantage. Elsewhere he was simply sensible.
On the other hand, there are certain drivers whom I would prefer to avoid fighting with. When overtaking some drivers, you have to be extra careful because some of them are really dangerous. I'm not going to mention any names, but there are some notoriously dangerous drivers in the Formula One field. □

Lole's facial expressions are well-known throughout Formula One. They're almost institutions.

THE STRANGER

The fans were singing, shouting, whistling and cheering. The object of their adulation, however, appeared to be impervious to the noise. His face was as impassive as ever, indifferent to the fans who shouted his name, not even noticing the arms waving at him. Only every now and then did the shadow of a smile cross his face or his lips part in silent greeting to a friend. What an extraordinary contrast to his remarkably exuberant compatriots. To this land of enthousiasm and chauvinism, Carlos Alberto Reutemann, the local hero, is virtually a stranger.

The grass is green in Argentina, and allows for a quiet life.

This was the moment when the crowd perhaps felt closer than ever to Carlos. He was sharing his joke with them in the stands and they loved it.

Another sort of single seater for another purpose. Carlos loves working on his house and in his garden.

by Eric BHAT

The scene was a typical one to be found in any pit between practice sessions. The mechanics were busying themselves with Williams No 2, and the driver, Carlos Reutemann, was quietly looking over his car. As ever, he was serious, contemplating the problems of the session just finished, and considering his tactics in the future, more important afternoon session. It was a scene that Reutemann had repeated hundreds of times in his nine year old Formula One career. But for one of his compatriots, armed with a camera, this was a moment that could be immortalised on celluloid. Carlos noticed him and stopped for a second in order to make the man's task easier.

The fellow was almost certainly more an enthusiast than a professional. The importance of this moment began to tell. His hands trembled, he couldn't focus, he wiped his fingers all over the lense. This photo of the century — Carlos Reutemann with car — would soon be taken.

And finally it was in focus. Too late. Carlos had left. The emotion had been too great and the man with the camera had missed his picture.

His friends would forgive him. After all, hundreds of Argentines would have done the same thing. How could one remain calm and collected when standing before a hero, a god?

It could be in front of his house in Santa Fe, but it is actually many thousands of kilometers away at St-Jean Cap Ferrat in the South of France.

Carlos, indifferent, is escorted by his fans and his press. Outside the paddock gate, there are ten times as many people waiting for him.

Photo Editorial Atlantida, B. Asset & E. Colombo.

Because in Argentina, that's just what Carlos Reutemann is. He may be a little stooped, often rather quiet and he may not have a lot to say, often replying to questions with a grimace rather than words, but no one has any solution to that. He's the hero of the crowd. He looks the part: a proud driver like a Roman emperor, the current leader of the World Champion. He's the warring, conquering hero who defies death and wins races. This hero is cast in bronze. The Argentines are a chauvinistic race as are many South Americans. The press in Argentina exploit this fact as much as provoke it and they present Carlos in a godlike manner. They write of beautiful Carlos here and marvellous Carlos there. Not surprisingly, the readership are white hot fanatics by the time the Grand Prix begins, such is the flattery devoted to their idol.

It's hard to imagine that there has ever been a sporting personality more worshipped and adored than Reutemann. He has his own nickname: Lole, and everyone shouts it. A song — or should it be hymn — has been written to extol his virtues and the whole public sing loudly at the circuit before the Grand Prix is due to start. The Argentines are fanatic about their hero, but the manner in which this is manifested is sometimes rather alarming. Take the unfortunate experience of one European journalist. He was chatting to Reutemann as his profession compels him to at many circuits. Once he'd finished his conversation, he shook the driver by the hand and wandered off. Imagine his horror when he found that he was being followed by a large group of locals towards the press office. He feared the worst: a mugging, beating up, perhaps even murder?

But no, it was simply that he'd touched Carlos Alberto Reutemann, and that made him almost a demi-god. They wanted to touch his hand in turn.

And here was Carlos walking through the paddock, not looking his best one might say, with a towel over his stooped shoulders. In spite of his chiselled face and his star rating, he looked rather more like a pilgrim. All the same, there were twenty people following him closely, tracking him like a criminal. He walked on, shaking the occasional hand here and there. "Carlos, Carlos," came the cries. "Lole, Lole", came the replies. His supporters shouted his name while they followed. It almost sounded like a chant.

The twenty soon grew to thirty, and then to forty. Thanks to considerable reinforcements, by the time he got to the office where the drivers' briefing was to take place, there were many hundreds around him. It was no longer a little group, it was more a demonstration, almost a revolution. Carlos has a magnetic affect on his people. Somewhere in the seething mass, the one man walked. His face was as impassive as ever. The occasional smile escaped as he zigzagged his way through his followers. He obviously didn't appreciate this hero worship. No one could have blamed him for attracting these people: he didn't act like a film star, nor did he pull off any stunts to gather the people around him.

But this was nothing new. Every Argentine Grand Prix is the same for Carlos Reutemann. Except this one was a little different. The famous story of the pit boards at Rio was on everyone's lips. Of course Carlos was right to win. What did Frank Williams think he was doing trying to make Jones win, was the general feeling.

The Argentines were clearly upset that Williams should have dreamed of taking a win away from Reutemann. And as for giving it to Jones, that was ridiculous. Jones was obviously thought of as a bloody nuisance who stopped Reutemann from winning the World Champion. When Reutemann appeared on the cinema screen in the Italian film Pole Position, he was cheered. When Jones appeared, there were loud whistles. Every waiter in every restaurant knew that the beloved Lole was right to win, while Jones was simply cursed.

Feelings were just as strong at the circuit. Jones was booed as loudly as Reutemann was cheered. Meanwhile the Williams mechanics had their own ideas. While Carlos was chatting to Jacques Laffite between sessions on Saturday, the Williams men made up a board similar to that shown at Rio: "JONES-REUT." The locals didn't take to that at all and there were shouts of derision at the thinly veiled insult.

Frank took his public relations into his own hands. He had the names swopped over so that it read "REUT-JONES" and got Reutemann to hold it up to the people across the road in the stands. Carlos did this with a large smile on his face (one of the few all weekend) and pandemonium broke out across the road in the stands as they cheered and shouted, supporting their hero

Apart from the little pit board incident in the pits, Reutemann let little emotion show while he raced in his national Grand Prix. Carlos loves racing, he even says he wakes up thinking about his races. But you'd never think so to see him. He wanted to win the Argentina Grand Prix, but to see him, one's first reaction was that he was really bored with being shouted at, worshipped, crowded, idolised and touched. In order to discourage the actions of his fans, he's built up his own personal wall of indifference. If he smiled a them all and shook their hands, that would encourage them. The stoney face makes it look as though he'll bite their heads off instantly if he's annoyed.

When Lole took to the track for his warming up laps a few minutes before the start of the race, a cloud of confetti rained down from the stands, and the Argentines sang their Reutemann song. But inside his cockpit, hiding behind the wall of his helmet, Carlos was inaccessible. □

TEN YEARS OF GROUND

Current events in which designers are trying hard to bend the rules to increase their cars' ground effect is nothing new to motor racing. It's simply an extension of the ten year old story of ground effect, a factor that everyone had thought would have diminished with the banning of skirts.

di Giorgio PIOLA

Before the 1981 World Championship got under way, it was thought that the major event was the banning of skirts, previously fitted to the bottom of side pods. There were certain technical points to be noted in this banning, but they were mostly lost in the war waged between the president of FISA and Bernie Ecclestone of FOCA. The opening races of the season have been marked by problems arising from the interpretation of rules written more by politicians than by engineers. The reason for banning skirts was to limit cars' cornering speeds. The ban has failed to do this, and following the Lotus and Brabham leads, every designer is now trying to find his way round the skirt ban.

This has been a logical development. You have to go back to 1970 in order to trace the origins of ground effect. One of the major causes for aerodynamic research were a Formula One car's tyres, stuck out in the breeze unlike those on a sports car. Yet it was only at the start of the 1970 season that designers began to concentrate on improving a car's penetration through the air.

The first appearance of a wing profile on the side of a car dates back to 1970 when the Robin Herd-designed March 701 appeared with side pods. But in spite of these pods, there was little aerodynamic downforce. Eight years later, Colin Chapman proved to the world that there was something in this system, demonstrating that the air speed through side pod and venturi could be beneficial. But in order to do the job properly the use of wing profiles had to be combined with the isolation of the air passing under the car which mustn't be allowed to be hindered. The March 701, without skirts, hadn't a hope of working.

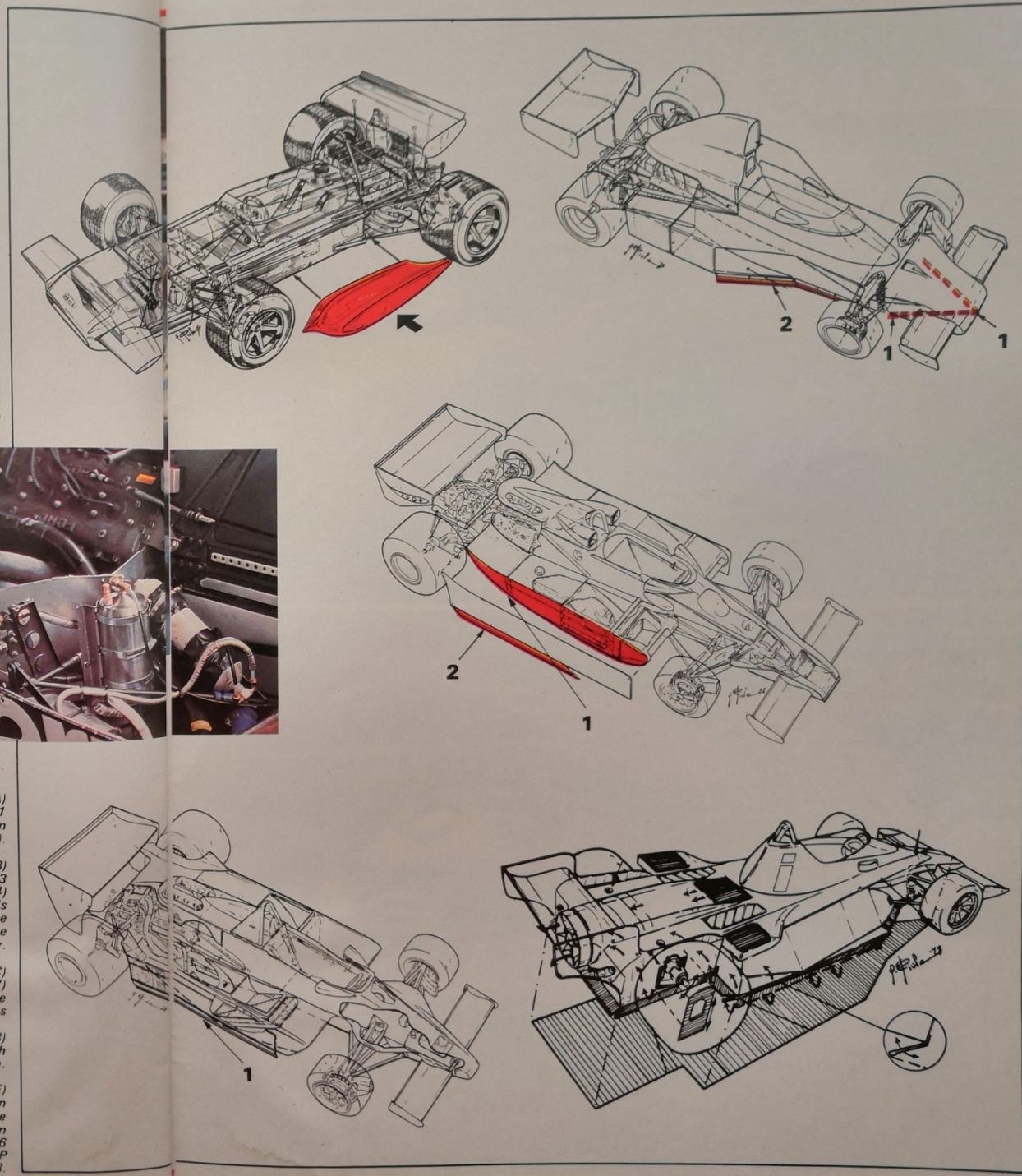
It was on the McLaren M23 that flexible rubbing strips first made their appearance. The car was driven by Emerson Fittipaldi in the Austrian Grand Prix of 1974, but the reason that these strips made their debut was totally different to their aim a few years later. The idea of the strips on the McLaren was to stop air passing under the car.

In 1977 Chapman combined the two ideas of a wing profile and those rubbing strips - which were flexible - on the Lotus 78. It was the next year that ground effect really took off on the Lotus 79 with a venturi under the side pods, rear suspension specially designed in order to improve air flow, and mobile but rigid skirts that ensured air pressure under the car.

Chapman's invention upset a number of constructors at first for they reckoned that it contravened the spirit of the regulations that banned moveable aerodynamic elements. But their anger was vented on another invention the same year when the Brabham fan car appeared in Sweden, and that, they thought, was even further from the spirit of the regulations. The fan in fact created the same effect as the venturi, if not greater, and it meant that the ground effect wasn't subjected to the speed of the car. With the fan, the ground effect was constant. There was so much to be gained from this that Gordon Murray was able to add quite a lot of weight to the car with the fan without it slowing the car down. But was the car legal? A new expression came into being called principal function. According to Murray, the principal function of the fan was to cool the engine.

Few people believed that, and after the car had won the Swedish Grand Prix, it was banned. From that moment on, all ground effect cars became legal because there didn't appear to be the slightest way of stopping them.

Since then, skirts have been banned. It was hoped that their banning would considerably reduce cars' cornering speeds, but this obviously hasn't been the case. As things stand at the moment, cars have just as much ground effect as before but using a lot more complicated, yet a lot less safe and less constant systems. The ground effect story continues. □



Hydro-pneumatic suspension on Brabham BT 49 in Argentina.

A) March 701 designed by Rodin Herd (1970).

B) McLaren M23 (1974) 1-2) Flexible panels designed to reduce air turbulence underneath the car.

C) Lotus 78 (1977) 1) Side-pod profile 2) Flexible skirts

D) Lotus 79 (1978) 1) Rigid skirts with sliding mechanism.

E) The notorious fan system fitted to the winning Brabham BT 46 in the Swedish GP of 1978.

RENAULT: NOT ENTIRELY HAPPY, NOT EXACTLY SAD

It was the first time that Alain Prost had been seen on a Grand Prix rostrum, and it's all due to his swift adaptation to the Renault turbo. When he arrived in Buenos Aires, however, he rather hoped to be on the to step.

René Arnoux scored his first points this season, despite being held up by vibration caused by his flat-spotted tyres. The two drivers' results confirmed that Renault are again competitive.

Briefing time at Renault. The big problem: how to beat a car with moveable suspension when one has only normal suspension?

The feelings about the results of the Argentine GP swung between satisfaction and disappointment as the men from the Régie weighed it up afterwards. On the whole, it was a good result for the Prost-Arnoux duo, certainly when the débâcles of Long Beach and Rio were taken into account, for here they had both come home in the points with 3rd and 5th places. But they had arrived in Buenos Aires with hopes of a win, only to hit problems with vibrations which slowed both cars. Above all, the Renault men were convinced that the winner's car was illegal.

by Rob DE LA SALLE

Something happened during the unofficial Thursday afternoon test session at Buenos Aires to suggest that the luck of the Renault team might at last be swinging their way after the misfortunes of the previous two races. A year earlier, the yellow turbocars from Renault Sport had been far from suitable for the number 15 circuit of Buenos Aires' *Autodromo Municipal*, due mainly to handling difficulties through the tight infield sections.

This time it was different. In spite of worries that the same problem would arise, here they were again with Prost and Arnoux reporting that they were comfortable through the previously "difficult" sections.

As Arnoux explained, *"it's not what we expected. Last year, with the skirts, we had more downforce. We also had grippier tyres. Yet we couldn't get through the big loop at the end of the straight without lifting. Today,* pas de probleme : *both of us are taking it flat out. I can't explain why. It must be one of those inexplicable mysteries of the racing business."*

On Thursday, with three days to go before the Grand Prix, the men in white and yellow felt more than confident about their chances. At last they were at a circuit which suited their cars, *"a track which does not put the turbocharged engines at a disadvantage"*, as Didier Pironi confirmed after a few laps in his Ferrari 126 turbo.

Nevertheless, despite the high hopes of the Ferrari and Renault teams, only the French were able to confirm their potential. *"I think that everyone must have written us off a bit soon"*, grinned Arnoux on Friday. *"It's weird, because everyone's coming to talk to us again, almost as if something miraculous had happened"*.

"I think we can be forgiven for blaming bad luck for everything that happened to us in California and Brazil," added Prost. *"But the unofficial test session*

here proves that that we have a good chance of winning. It's important to us, our championship chances must not be allowed to slip away".

Unofficially, Alain had already set the fastest time of the session, just ahead of Arnoux, and they were hoping for something better in Friday's official qualifying : *"the aerodynamics are already perfectly set up, but there are some mechanical improvements which we can make, several minor alterations to investigate before the car is absolutely right".*

At this stage, the Renaults looked more impressive than the Williams which now represent the bench mark of success. Nobody had started muttering yet about the Brabham, for Piquet had a bad stomach problem which held him back, just as they had last year at Watkins Glen.

Once the Friday morning practice was under way, the two Renault drivers were able to start the final stages of setting up their cars. Prost took over the T-car to set it up in case it was needed later in the weekend... and meanwhile Piquet's indisposition had improved so dramatically that suddenly he became the man to watch. At this stage, however, the theory was that he'd managed to get his hands on some of the softer 003 type Michelins, known to be be better suited to the circuit than the 002s which had been used on the more abrasive Rio circuit and were fitted to the two Renaults.

With the first official session at an end, a pattern was already being settled : Piquet 1 m 42.66s ; Prost 1 m 42.99s ; Reutemann 1 m 43.95s ; Arnoux 1 m 44.00s. For Prost, there was considerable satisfaction in finding himself ahead of the Rio winner. But the Brabham was already well ahead of everyone, its hydro-pneumatic suspension obviously working well.

Nevertheless, Prost's Renault looked good in the "unskirted" class, which in itself was a major cause of satisfaction. By Saturday afternoon, with qualifying finished, there was little change. Prost was on the front row, 0.32s behind Piquet, with Arnoux on the outside of thet the third : Renault chances looked as good as ever. Putting the problem of beating Piquet to one side, Prost's only concern was the durability of his tyres. A full 24 hours before the race, he said that he had noticed what he described as *"a slight deterioration in the handling"* after a good number of laps, which was a slight worry.

The reliability of the cars, however, seemed to be first class. Not a single engine had blown up throughout the three days of testing, there had been nothing at all to upset the optimism of the men from Viry-Châtillon. And the relatively cool wether during the sunday morning warm-up session was another encouragement for a team whose engines tend to suffer when the temperature is high.

There were a few shadows on the wall, however, not least the 0.32s gap separating Prost from Piquet's pole position Brabham. Since both drivers claimed that they had been baulked by faster traffic when they were on their "hot" laps, it would not have been too much to expect them to do better still. In fact they were both still disappointed with the straight line spped of their RE20Bs. As Gérard Larrousse explained, *"To get more top speed we would have to take off more wing, which we think would spoil the aerodynamic balance. It would also make it much more difficult for the drivers to get the power on to the road coming out of the slow corners. We have to go for a compromise, and finding it won't be easy. If Piquet lasts the distance he's got this race in his pocket : that Brabham is a real wing car and I don't think he's even taken it close to the limits of its performance."*

Gérard Larrousse, of course, was absolutely right. Arnoux made a fine start, and although Prost got away less well the race had soon settled into its order. By lap seven it was cirtually fixed, with Prost close behind Reutemann and Arnoux filling Jones' mirrors. Piquet was pulling out a big gap, soon to be followed by the sister car of Rebaque, proving everything which Larrousse and others had said about it, for the Brabhams had deliberately been held back in practice. No doubt the British team did not want to give the game away or attract the unwelcome attention from other equipes which was arrive in the form of protests from Williams and Renault when the race was over.

Thus performance of Ecclestone's cars was not a complete surprise, but at the same time it was interesting to see the difficulties which the Renault drivers were having in overhauling the two Williams. The reasons for the Renaults' lack it is speed has already been covered in this article, but it is still noteworthy that they couldn't close up even a centimetre on the Williams, which of course don't have the advantage of turbocharged engines.

The mystery was to be explained, at least in part, at the finish. "After making a poor start I was sure that I would be able to hault in Reutemann", said Prost, *"and for five laps it looked as though I would make it. But suddenly I got some terrible vibrations, probably because the wheels went out of balance. Then I ran into gearbox problems: second gear refused to engage. I missed three shifts on the lap that Rebaque passed me, and from half distance onwards the transmission was giving me constant trouble".*

As far as the gearbox was concerned, the problem was just as bad in the cockpit of the number 16 Renault, in which Arnoux had been doing his best to chase Alan Jones's down-on-power Williams for 5th place. *"I think I must have flat-spotted a couple of tyres by braking too late for a slow corner",* he confessed as an explanation for his own vibration troubles. *"Also",* droned Rene, *"the front wing seems to have been twisted by something I hit, probably a bird".* However, even before the vibrations started to affect him be was able to establish that there was no way of catching Jones. *"His top speed was exactly the same as mine : there was no way of making up even a centimetre on him," repeated the Frenchman.*

Having benefited from the retirement of Rebaque from 2nd place with engine trouble, Prost and Arnoux were credited with 3rd and 5th places. Renault felt that Prost had effectively finished 2nd, at least if one discounts the Brabham because of its ground effect, and - as such - the tact that it was way out of reach of the cars without that advantage. Without the vibrations, Prost might have been able to catch Reutemann, and who knows what thrilling result that imaginary battle would have had !

Everything indicated that the men at Renault Sport had made an excellent analysis of the situation as early as Thursday when they realised that they had a good chance of winning. Equally clearly, however, they had not been able to anticipate the cunning ruse of the perfidious Brabham team, nor the lack of top speed of the turbocars. Thus the hoped-for advantage on the quick Buenos-Aires circuit was not to be fully exploited.

Nor had was it been possible to blame the heat which had enveloped the circuit shortly before the start, and not during the Sunday morning warm-up, because the problem is alreadyu a familiar one at Renault. There is another factor to be considered, just as mysterious as the surprisingly good handling of the cars, though this one was a negative one. Renault, like Talbot and Alfa Romero, uses Magneti Marelli ignition systems, and the problems encountered in this department by the French and Italian teams at Buenos Aires have already been offered as their excuse. It seems possible that the Renaults, noted for their greater than normal power, may have suffered from less lively ignition than normally. It's a simple theory, though it would help to explain whu the traditionally high top speed of the Renaults, for once, was to let down the men from Paris. □

PROST *Scriptum*

A driver inside his car, concentrating on setting up his car or solving some sort of problem in the pits is often far too preoccupied to remember just why he's there in the first place : because of the public. The enthusiasm, the warmth and in fact the presence of the Argentine public brought it home to me just how depressing it can be to drive in front of empty grandstands. The Argentine fans aren't everyone's favourites and Jones and Piquet perhaps have more reason to dislike them than others. So rather than talk about fanatics and the less pleasant connotations of that word, I prefer to talk about enthusiasts.

The Argentines, apart from their chauvinism, are perhaps the most knowledgeable motor sport enthusiasts that I've ever met. I think it would be wrong to embrace all South American peoples in that description. The Brazilians aren't as infatuated with Grand Prix racing as their neighbours. And they're not experts compared to the Argentines. In Buenos Aires, everyone from taxi driver to restaurateur knew all about the recent Jones-Reutemann rivalry, and knew just what kind of contract bound Reutemann to Frank Williams. And they were all charming about it too, providing you didn't try to explain to them that Reutemann was actually the number two driver.

On Thursday evening I went to pick up my hire car from the car park. I'd parked it rather carelessly when I'd arrived at the circuit, but then these things happen. The policemen recognised me and swore to me that if I'd been Alan Jones, they would have picked me up on some trumped up charge like headlamp adjustment and put me in prison until Sunday night. And I am not sure they were joking. But then that's the other side of the coin. Sometimes their enthusiasm carries them a little too far.

I remember seeing some photographs of the Mexican Grand Prix many years ago - I was in short trousers at the time - when the spectators were quietly eating their picnics at the side of the track. They just wanted to see the cars close up. But I prefer the Argentine spectator's mentality - from a distance - to that of the Europeans who aren't real enthusiasts and are rather too secular for my taste. When an Argentine likes a sport, it doesn't mean he claps his hands together occasionally in appreciation. I used to play football when I was younger, so I went to see the Buenos Aires derby of Boca Junior versus the River Plate team. It was incredible in those grandstands. I've been to Division One matches at Saint Etienne but they were never like this one. It's more a question of temperament than the actual quality of the game. They're hot blooded people, the Argentines, and the action doesn't just take place on the field. Physical contact is transmitted to the stands. And slowly, the people round about me began to recognise me. I found myself surrounded by a hundred people, no kidding.

Their questions and comments showed just much they knew about motor sport. They knew all about me, about the various stages in my career, and where I lived. Actually they got that slightly wrong because they thought that I lived in St Etienne. But they chatted about the streets and buildings of the town, even mentioning them by name. It made no difference that the papers had it wrong that I lived in St Etienne. If they'd known that I live in St Chamond they would have been just as knowledgable about that town. I found it incredible. And to think that I walk around St Chamond completely untroubled and scarcely recognised...

At one moment, Maradona, their idol, scored a goal. The fellow behind me was so happy that he rammed his hat down onto my head and only my ears stopped it going any further. That's typical of the Argentine public. They all wanted to shake my hand and slap me on the shoulder. It was raining in the stadium so they all but buried me under a mountain of newspapers and bits of plastic trying to keep me dry. I left the stadium at half-time and as he drove me back to the hotel, the taxi driver asked me how I rated Reutemann's chances in the race. Then we heard on the radio that Maradona had scored another goal. The driver had to take both hands off the wheel to applaud his hero.

This time I managed to get through the entire race, but I could imagine the atmosphere in the stands. The simple fact that to perform well in front of such a knowledgeable crowd drove me on to do better all the time. It was as though I wanted to thank them for being such great motor sporting enthusiasts. □

ALAN JONES

Beaten by my own team mate in Rio and blown off by a pair of illegal Brabhams in Buenos Aires! That's not much to write home about from South America, although if you look on the bright side it's better than some of our less fortunate rivals were able to achieve.

I'm not going to go again into the problems within our team during the race at Rio, except to say that Carlos Reutemann and I now understand each other perhaps a little better than we did before. I wish the Argentine race fans had had shown a little more discretion than they did in Buenos Aires. It's one thing to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the local boy, but the vitriolic attitude they showed to me verged at times on the frightening. I wasn't sorry to leave the place. Frank Williams was extremely disappointed with the decision of the stewards in BA not to take any action against the Brabham, which both and he and our designer Patrick Head regarded as being outside both the spirit and the letter of the new FI rules. But unless FISA has over-ruled the Argentine decision not to act on the Brabham, we shall have to make plans for our own system of flexible skirts. That's the only way to make up the Brabham superioprity - and having been passed both by Piquet and Rebaque in BA I can tell you that they have got a big, big advantage.

Frank's complaints against the Brabhams have nothing to do with the suspension system they're using, because the 1981 rulebook (the origin of so many disputes) clearly states that the 6 cm of ground clearance under the cars is required only when they're stationary. Indeed, we have already tasted a hydro-pneumatic lowering system similar to the Brabham arrangement.

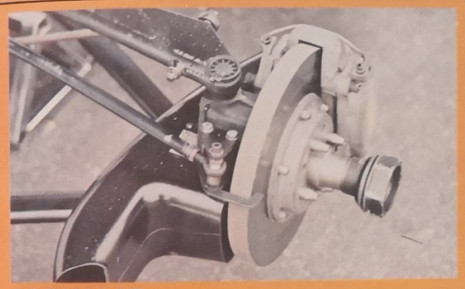
It is the skirts of the Brabham which we regard as being outside the rules. It was a unanimous agreement of the FI teams only a few weeks ago that we would not have any skirts under the cars, yet you don't need binoculars to see that the Brabhams have got something underneath it that looks suspiciously like a skirt. Protests made no difference, in fact the two that Frank put in, on Friday and after the race on Sunday, were both rejected. Perhaps the most surprising side of this was that President Balestre appeared reluctant to act. Certainly the officials of Argentine club demonstrated that they didn't want any scandals at their race.

It seems strange to be returning to Europe with only three weeks to go before the next race on the calendar. Normally we come back from South America with at least two months in which to catch up with the opposition or to make plans to stay ahead. This time the mechanics will have only two or three days in the workshop before they have to get the cars down to Imola for a tyre test in readiness for the GP there on May 3. And the mechanics have already been away from home for seven long weeks, ever since they departed for Long Beach!

Our team was genuinely surprised by the comparatively poor performance in South America of the turbocars. The later date of the race in Buenos Aires would, we thought, give the Renaults a big boost, if only because the temperatures were cooler than the usual January date, when the South American summer is at its fiercest. And after the tremendous power demonst rated by the Ferraris at Long Beach it was quite a shock see them struggling on a circuit which should have been to their liking. We're not under any delusions, though : both teams will be strong rivals again before long.

Meanwhile, we have some interesting plans of our own which will be revealed in due course. No hints, but you won't notice anything unusual unless you can count over four... and I promise that we'll be absolutely sure it conforms with the rules *before* we present it to the scrutineers. □

Cockpits



PARMALAT BRABHAM

Brabham-Ford
BT 49/11 :
Nelson Piquet (BR)
Brabham-Ford
BT 49/12 :
Hector Rebaque (MEX)

The Brabham team's hydro-pneumatic suspension obviously worked perfectly all weekend: there were no problems with it at all. Each time one of the cars stopped in the pits, it was always at least six centimeters off the ground as it should have been.

Rebaque's car was not fitted with the Weismann gearbox so his car was identical to Piquet's. On Friday, Nelson tried new carbon fibre brakes and went off the road. The middle pedal had gone to floor because of a brake fluid leakage. On Saturday, Piquet was happy to practice on fuel tanks to set his car up for the race because he thought that the strong wind would stop the others from going quicker. He was right. He started from pole position while Rebaque set sixth fastest time.

Piquet was untouchable during the race, streaking into the lead and staying there until the end. Rebaque drove through the field and calmly took Reutemann for second place until the electrics packed up on the Brabham and Rebaque retired. He parked the car at the side of the track, where it was found to have only two centimeters of ground clearance.

SAUDIA LEYLAND WILLIAMS

Williams-Ford
FW07/11 :
Alan Jones (AUS)
Williams-Ford
FW07/12 :
Carlos Reutemann (RA)

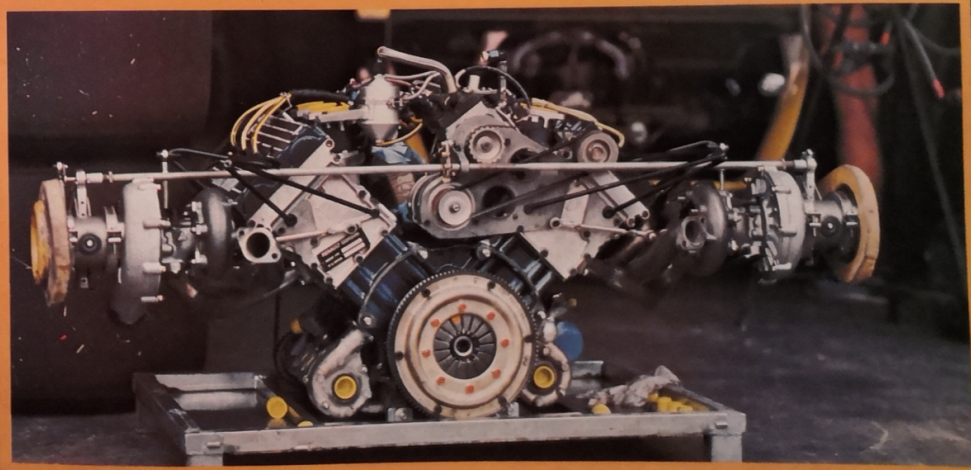
Replacing FW 07/10 as the spare car was a new monocoque which had been sent out from England and, like the race cars, had a reinforced front end, similar in specification to the latest Williams. This car was used a lot. Jones set the car up in unofficial testing. Then during the official sessions, the Australian driver wasn't happy with own car. So while Reutemann was stationary in the pits on Friday, Jones first of all battled with his own car whose engine was down on power, and then took over the spare which still wasn't handling properly. On the Saturday, his race car understeered badly, possibly due to the shock absorber choice, and as the injection wasn't working as well as it might, Jones decided to start the race in the spare car.

But Jones's problems persisted during the race and he couldn't do better than fourth - not lad all the same - while Reutemann, even though he was cheered on by his home crowd, could do nothing about the Brabhams of Piquet and even Rebaque. But thanks to his second place, Reutemann is now in the lead of the World Championship, with Jones second. So the Williams are the most competitive and legal cars both on the track and in the pits. But unless something is done to prevent the rest of the field copying Brabham's suspension system, they will have a similar system at Imola including Williams.

RENAULT ELF

Renault RE 27B :
René Arnoux (F)
Renault RE 26B :
Alain Prost (F)
Renault RE 22B :
spare

A new monocoque had been delivered to the Renault team since Brazil replacing that damaged by Arnoux at Jacarepagua. Neither car had the least mechanical trouble either during practice or in the race: they were utterly reliable. But the Brabhams were faster. Even so, the French cars were faster than the Williams during practice, particularly Prost, but they could do little about the two English cars in the race. Prost and Arnoux were troubled by the same thing: vibration. Arnoux's problems originated from flat-spotting his tyres when trying to overtake Jones, while Prost's vibrations apparently came from out of line wheel rims. Furthermore, he was later held up by a recalcitrant gearbox.



Cockpits

ESSEX LOTUS

Lotus-Ford 81/3:
Elio de Angelis (1)
Lotus-Ford 81/2:
Nigel Mansell (GB)
Lotus-Ford 88/1:
spare

The Lotus 88 story was almost shorter and stormier than ever in Argentina. De Angelis tried it on Thursday when he first of all had a spin in the badly balanced car, and then the engine broke. It was stopped from going out to practise on Friday, once again for no apparent reason, so Colin Chapman packed his bags and went back to England in disgust. De Angelis consequently had to take over his old 81 in which he found it hard to set a decent time on the Saturday, even though he said the car felt fine. He was delayed after a coming together with Surer during the race, but then proceeded to climb back up through the field to a worthy sixth place
Mansell broke his clutch during Saturday's practice and was unable to iron out understeer. The next day, he wanted to try softer springs, but then he spun and r as:hals refused to push start him, and that's where his practice ended. His race was very brief, the engine blowing up on the third lap.

ENSIGN

Ensign-Ford
180 B/15:
Marc Surer (CH)

The Ensign team is still in dire financial straits, to such an extent that Surer didn't participate in some unofficial practice sessions because the team only had one engine and that had already done practice in Brazil. Furthermore, the two engineers were back in England working on a modified 180, development continuing despite lack of sponsorship. Surer started on the eighth row and didn't really feature apart from colliding with de Angelis on the third lap. He retired on the 15th lap when his engine broke. You can't work miracles every day...

RAGNO BETA ARROWS

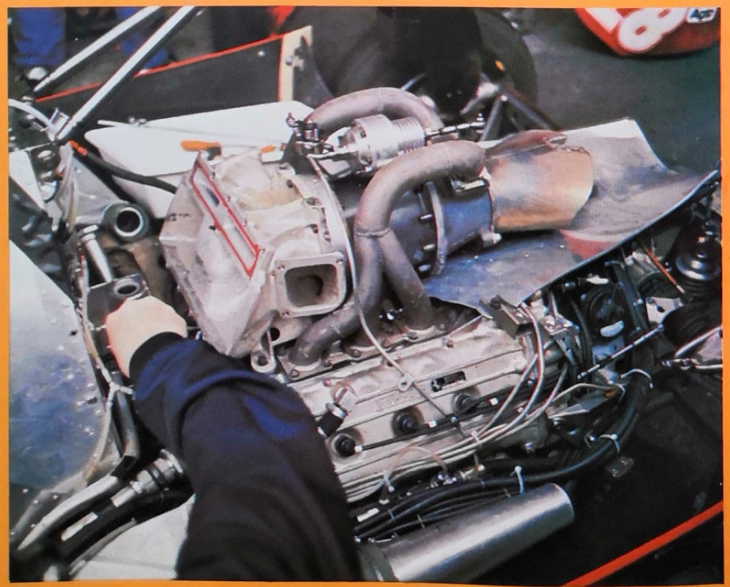
Arrows-Ford A3/03:
Riccardo Patrese (I)
Arrows-Ford A3/06:
Siegfried Stohr (I)
Arrows-Ford A3/02:
spare

The Arrows team had shaved some 20 kilos off Patrese's car between races, and the Italian did a lot of testing in the spare car. On the Friday, he had some administrative trouble because his fastest time was cancelled as his car was not six centimeters above the ground on the right side, even though this measurement was apparently taken on uneven ground. On the Saturday, engine trouble prevented Riccardo from doing enough laps in order to improve his time. He had his car set up with very little wing, so that it wasn't very good in the twisty bits, but quick down the straight. Teammate Stohr was 400 revs down on the team leader on the straights because of his wing set-up, but he did welto qualify as high as he did.
Patrese had two problems during the race: he suffered vibration at the front and the accelerator kept sticking. Stohr was happy to get his understeering car to the finish.
At Imola both drivers should be driving lightened cars, and Patrese could well have similar hydro-pneumatic suspension to the Brabham, if he's allowed to. The team is also planning to build various new suspension set-ups, plus a new gearbox casting.

FERRARI SEFAC

Ferrari 126 C-K/051:
Gilles Villeneuve (CDN)
Ferrari 126 C-K/050:
Didier Pironi (F)
Ferrari 126 C-K/049:
spare

During unofficial testing, Didier Pironi tried a new version of the Comprex engine. This new Comprex is seven kilos lighter than the previous one and is mounted lower down on the engine. But it threw a belt so from Friday onwards the cars were all fitted with KKK turbo engines. Villeneuve had two cars at his disposal and provided the mechanics with a lot of hard work, breaking an engine on both Friday and Saturday. The Italians spent most of their time either taking out an engine or fitting one in. During the warm-up, Villeneuve went off the road and hit Mansell's car that was already parked on the grass. The Canadian had to start the race in the spare, but he again went off the road and broke a halfshaft trying to get back on the track again. Pironi's engine broke after only three laps, bringing the total to five damaged during the weekend.



ALFA ROMEO AUTODELTA

Alfa Romeo
179 C/02:
Mario Andretti (USA)
Alfa Romeo
179 C/03:
Bruno Giacomelli (I)
Alfa Romeo
179 C/01:
Andretti's spare
Alfa Romeo
179 D/1:
Giacomelli's spare

The team had had delivered a 1980 chassis onto which they'd built new wing profiles in the side pods to try and recapture lost performance. And after their various electrical problems in Brazil, two batteries were fitted to each car. But the problems persisted. The engines would rev to 12400 for a couple of laps and then the drivers would only get 11800. The roadholding problems weren't solved either. Each driver tried to find his own solution, but without success. The springs seem to be too soft and the cars rolled too much in fast corners. During the race, Andretti suffered an ailment which is becoming far too common on Alfas: a broken exhaust. Giacomelli looked as though he was going to finish the race until he ran out of petrol on the last lap.

TEAM TYRRELL

Tyrrell-Ford 010/3-6:
Eddie Cheever (USA)
Tyrrell-Ford 010/2:
Ricardo Zunino (RA)
Tyrrell-Ford 010/1:
spare

The only novelty on the Tyrrells was new rear suspension geometry. Cheever seemed happy with his car's handling at the start of practice, but when he tried to set a time on Saturday, he was surprised to find that it was slower than before. The reason seemed to be that the springs were too soft and weren't giving him good roadholding in fast corners. He burnt his clutch on the line and never completed a lap. Zunino, meanwhile, managed to qualify despite a broken engine on the Saturday, started from the back row and finished 13th and last.

ATS WHEELS

ATS-Ford
D4/05:
Jan Lammers (NL)

The ATS team is waiting to debut the new car at Imola, so not surprisingly, the older car wasn't modified for Argentina. Lammers still complained of poor roadholding and started from the back row of the grid alongside Zunino. He pitted in the race in order to add more wing as his car was virtually undriveable.

DENIM OSELLA

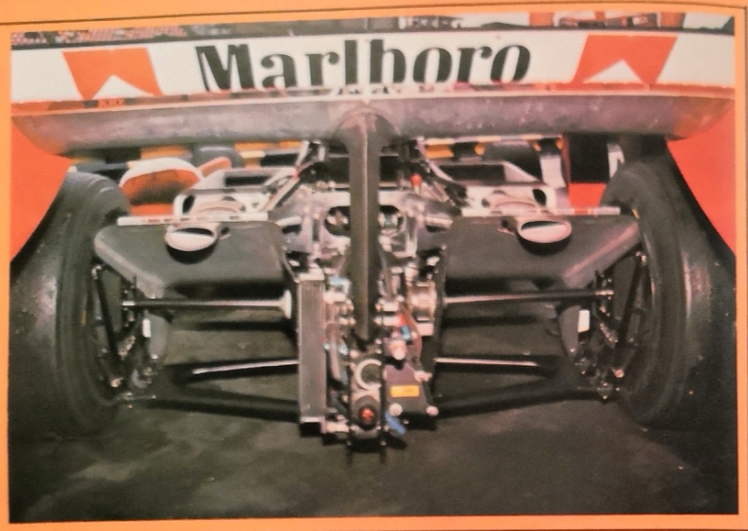
Osella-Ford
A1/03:
Beppe Gabbiani (1)
Osella-Ford
A1/04:
Miguel-Angel Guerra (RA)
Osella-Ford
A1/02:
spare

The Osella team's cars were unchanged for Argentina, but there are modifications on the way. At Imola, the Italian cars should be fitted with Brabham's hydro-pneumatic suspension, a big one-piece front wing, new bodywork and new rear suspension which should have been fitted before Argentina. But they need a lot more experience yet. Both drivers found that their cars didn't want to turn into corners, and neither qualified.

Cockpits

MARLBORO MCLAREN

McLaren-Ford M 29/2:
John Watson (GB)
McLaren-Ford M 29/5:
Andrea de Cesaris (I)



Watson was back in the Marlboro MP4 again in Argentina after some very encouraging testing in England following its rather brief debut at Long Beach. One of the problems solved was the breaking up of the exhaust system which threatened to set light to the bodywork. The car went well in Argentina and shows a lot of promise, even though there are still teething troubles. Watson had gearbox problems during practice and vibration caused both a pit stop and his retirement on the 36th lap of the race. De Cesaris could do little better than finish in his old M29 and that's just what he did, in eleventh place. The Roman driver should have a new MP4 to drive at Imola.

MARCH

March-Ford 811/01:
Derek Daly (IRL)
March-Ford 811/03:
Eliseo Salazar (RCH)

Daly's car in Argentina was the original test car which most drivers said handled well and certainly didn't have the problems recently encountered by the team, particularly in Brazil. It is a lot stiffer and stronger, and Eliseo Salazar was unable to test on Thursday for his car was being similarly strengthened and stiffened. But once again, neither of the drivers qualified. Daly reckons that the current 811 is only working at about 30 per cent efficiency. But a new car or at least a drastically modified car should be seen at Imola.

THEODORE RACING

Theodore-Ford TY 01/1:
Patrick Tambay (F)

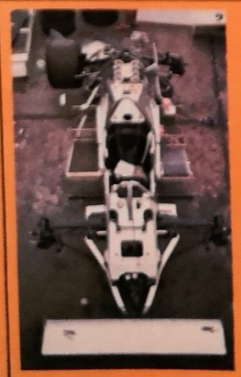
Tambay tried double springing on the Theodore at Buenos Aires which turned out to be thoroughly efficient and gave good results. But during practice Patrick hurt his right hand changing gear. He retired on the 37th lap of the race, the engine having broken following an oil leak.

TALBOT GITANES

Ligier-Matra JS 17/02:
Jacques Laffite (F)
Ligier-Matra JS 17/03:
Jean-Pierre Jabouille (F)
Ligier-Matra JS 17/01:
spare

It would be hard to get much worse. The French team were in more trouble than ever at Buenos Aires. Laffite qualified at the back, and Jabouille didn't even get onto the grid. The cars lacked grip and for some reason the engines were 800 revs down on both cars.

Laffite was the only Ligier driver to start and he collected so much rubber on his tyres from the other cars that he suffered vibration early on which caused his retirement. The engine wasn't pulling properly anyway.



FITTIPALDI

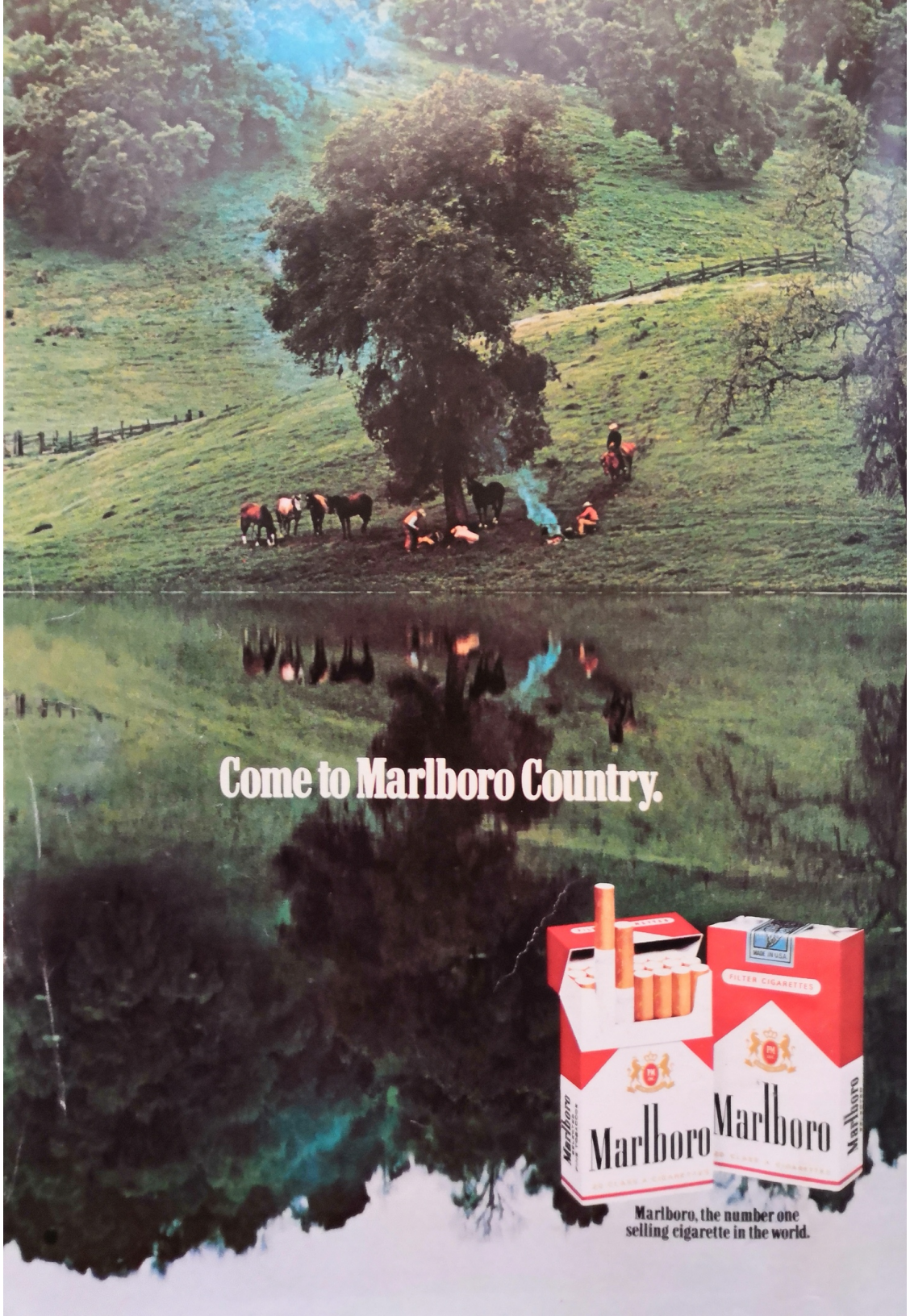
Fittipaldi-Ford F8/3:
Keke Rosberg (SF)
Fittipaldi-Ford F8/4:
Chico Serra (BR)
Fittipaldi-Ford F8/2:
Spare

The team's cars were unchanged in Argentina. Rosberg had an uneventful practice but Serra had big problems with his car's roadholding, particularly on the twistier sections of the circuit. The team's strategy currently, is to modify the F8 base car which they hope to use all season. The race wasn't a success for them. Keke stopped on the fourth lap without fuel pressure, and Serra scarcely made it past half distance before his transmission broke.

GRAND-PRIX N°31

SAN MARINO

WILL BE ON SALE ON MAY 13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